From Princes to Pages

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From Princes to Pages

The Literary Lives of Cardinal Wolsey, Tudor England's 'Other King'

By

Gavin Schwartz-Leeper

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For Becky (*and for Lucy too*)

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2 "Wolsey's journey to London on his way to France," artist unknown. Taken from Bodleian MS. Douce 363, George Cavendish's *Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey*. 1578, f. 58r. Reproduced with the kind permission of the Bodleian Library and the University of Oxford. 104

Introduction

> Rede me and be nott wrothe
> For I saye no thynge but trothe.[1]

So begins *Rede Me and Be Nott Wrothe*, a lengthy doggerel satire written by Jerome Barlowe and William Roy.[2] Apparently too controversial for English publishers, *Rede Me* was published in Strasbourg in 1528, and the authors were pursued by the Henrician authorities both on the European continent and across England.[3] These opening lines immediately present the reader with one of the major problems facing scholars of historical literature: the authors claim to write "nothing but truth," but what do they mean by "truth"? Certainly it is difficult to take *Rede Me* as a dispassionate and objective historical record; the frontispiece (on which these first lines appear) also displays a depiction of a coat of arms, described and analyzed in verse form:

> Of the prowde Cardinall this is the shelde
> Borne vp betwene two angels off Sathan.
> The sixe blouddy axes in a bare felde
> Sheweth the cruelte of the red man /
> whiche hathe devoured the beautifull swan.
> Mortall enmy vnto the whyte Lion /
> Carter of Yorcke / the vyle butchers sonne.[4]

The opening stanza would have signaled the satiric target of the text to all but the most obtuse or poorly informed early modern readers, in England and throughout Europe. The "vyle butchers sonne" was Thomas Wolsey (c. 1470–1530),

1 Jerome Barlowe and William Roy, *Rede Me and Be Nott Wrothe*, ed. Douglas H. Parker (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), f. a1^{r}, ll. 1–2.

2 Using the name "Jerome Barlowe" is problematic, as scholars are divided on whether or not the author was the Franciscan friar Jerome Barlowe (fl. 1528–1529) or the Reformist bishop William Barlow (d. 1568), or whether these two figures are actually one and the same. However, a letter from 12 June 1529 to Wolsey indicates that the cardinal was actively seeking Roy and a "Jerome Barlowe." That letter, amongst others, combined with Parker's use of Jerome means that this study will also use "Jerome Barlowe." See John Sherren Brewer, ed., *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII* (London: Longman, Trübner, Parker, Macmillan, A. & C. Black, and A. Thom, 1876), vol. 4.3, it. 5667.

3 Parker, 3. See also *L&P*, 4.3, it. 5667.

4 *Rede Me*, f. a1v, ll. 8–14.

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Rede me and be nott wrothe
For I saye no thynge but trothe.
I will ascende makynge my state so hye/
That my pompous honoure shall never dye.
O Caytyfe when thou thynkest least of all/
With confusion thou shalt have a fall.

FIGURE 1 *Frontispiece to Jerome Barlowe and William Roye,* Rede Me and Be Nott Wrothe (*Strasburg: Johann Schott, 1528*), *f.* a1^{r}. *Reproduced with the kind permission of the Huntington Library* (*69171*).

archbishop and cardinal of York, and the last clergyman to hold the Lord Chancellorship of England prior to the Reformation. Born in Ipswich, Wolsey came from humble beginnings—rumors that his father was a butcher persist through to the modern day, though Robert Wolsey was likely a merchant of some means—and, having established a reputation for efficiency and ability at the University of Oxford in the 1480s and 1490s, he joined the household of Henry VII in the final years of that monarch's reign. Having transitioned into the service of Henry VIII following his accession to the throne in 1509, Wolsey rose in power with astonishing rapidity: within six years, Wolsey had gone from a royal chaplaincy to a cardinalate (and papal legacy), the archbishopric of York, and the lord chancellorship. Wolsey established himself as the beating heart of English politics and by far the most powerful member of the Privy Council. Wolsey's extraordinary rise to power was enabled by his exceptional abilities and energies as an administrator; he was alleged to have worked from before dawn until late at night as a matter of course, rising from his desk only to hear mass several times a day and even eschewing breaks to urinate for many hours at a stretch. The young Henry VIII came to rely extensively on Wolsey's capacity to take on mundane tasks of governance, and as a result Wolsey was able to accrue an astonishing range of powers, offices, and responsibilities. By the early 1520s, Wolsey's processions and diplomatic excursions were on a royal level, earning him the appellation of "alter rex": the "other king."

A man of low birth with nearly boundless authority and exceptional wealth was bound to attract negative satire in Tudor England; as this book shows Wolsey featured in a wide range of contemporary literary texts. Some of this satire is easy to recognize: Barlowe and Roy's mock coat of arms for Wolsey is direct, as the specific mention of the "prowde Cardinall," the "red man," and the "Carter of Yorcke" as well as the "butchers sonne" comment describe no other possible candidates.[5] It is difficult to imagine that any reader would take the "two angels of Sathan" literally, but instead would have recognized that Barlowe and Roy are not describing Wolsey's actual coat of arms (which incorporated the silver cross of the Ufford earls of Suffolk, blue de la Pole leopards, Cornish choughs from the arms of Thomas Becket, a red lion to represent Pope Leo X, and the Tudor rose of Henry VIII). Rather, they are using an Aristotelian

5 The reference to Wolsey's alleged enmity to the "white lion" is particularly interesting in the context of the perceived feud between Wolsey and the Howard family (whose badge was the white lion). As chapter 1 shows, it is unlikely that a high degree of tension existed between Wolsey and the Howards. However, the inclusion of this feature in *Rede Me* indicates a contemporary perception of a feud, which indicates the lack of control Tudor figures might have had over their public images.

mimetic version: that is, an imitative version designed to resemble an object or concept while deviating enough from that object to achieve a particular rhetorical purpose distinct from what might be achieved from a more literal description. A "true" representation of the coat of arms, in this sense, is not limited to a literal description of an object; rather, a "true" representation of that object might alter details—even substantial elements—in order to provide the reader with a more accurate sense of what the purpose of the object might be, or what experiencing that object might have been like, even what lessons might be learned from that object.

If we apply this concept to how we think about representations of the past (both modern and historical) we must first recognize the difficulty that lies at the heart of early modern historiography: a "true" account might bear little extrinsic relation to empirical experiences, but for many early modern authors and readers, empiricism was not the determinant of "truth." Instead, we find early modern authors consciously adapting items from the documentary record—court records, government memoranda and documentation, charters, and, to an extent, correspondence—and providing clear instructions for how the reader should understand these items. These adaptations adhere to and support a narrative, and the narrativization—or the crafting of a coherent sequence of facts, events, and perspectives—of these components marks an inescapable departure from a theoretically "pure" transmission of *res gestae*, or Leopold van Ranke's *wie es eigentlich gewesen*: "deeds as they happened." The agency of the narrator therefore is of primary importance to the evolution of particular narratives as they are appropriated and adapted through the interplay between authorial and editorial purpose, and the social, cultural, religious, political, and economic factors that drove (or constrained) early modern readership.

Over time, particular features or tropes become dominant because they can speak to authors and readers in different contexts. This process leads to a crystallization of certain narratives, some of which have become established as the defining tropes for key figures or concepts: for example, Henry VIII as an obese and hedonistic tyrant, swollen fists planted on his hips, or Elizabeth I as a black-toothed hag, surrounded by fawning male courtiers. The power of these narratives can be substantial, shaping public perceptions of particular periods as well as defining scholarly inquiries. This concern raises an essential question: if the power of the narrative is pervasive at the most basic levels of history-writing, can we trust any historical account to provide empirical evidence of *res gestae*?

The answer is that we must acknowledge the existence of a different cultural attitude toward truth, history, and historiography during the Tudor period. The

development of Tudor antiquarianism and a concurrent growing awareness of anachronism (largely imported via Italian humanism) has been studied extensively, but there is a lack of conceptual precision in modern historiographical studies that belies an incoherence in scholarly discourse about the nature of history-writing in the early modern period. This is due in no small part to the taxonomical (and teleological) urge of historians to categorize early modern texts as falling within the three perceived categories of historical writing: the annal, the chronicle, and the modern history. Early modern text producers and consumers did not share this *doxa*, and the narrativity of people, events, and concepts makes early modern texts often cross these generic boundaries in ways that can be subtle or obvious.[6]

As an example of the disruptive effect of narrativity on scholarship, many modern scholars have drawn distinctions between the essential purposes of the late medieval chronicle—the key feature of which was the strictly chronological presentation of a range of events with little or no retrospective analysis—and the Tudor humanist history: specifically, that the purpose of the medieval chronicle was to deliver didactic lessons derived from (often) personal morality, whereas the humanist history heralded the advent of historical analysis closer to modern scholarly practice.[7] To an extent this is true, as there is a transition from exclusively didactic usage to more complex analysis. However, as this book demonstrates, this perspective implies a teleological progression—a binary—that oversimplifies the nature of history-writing in the sixteenth century. Rather than witnessing the smooth transition from medieval chronicle to humanist history, the Tudor period saw a splintering of historical writing that led to the creation of new genres: the polemical martyrology, the broadsheet, the pastoral poem, the dialogue, the history play, and, of course, the humanist history itself. Many texts in these genres engaged in history-writing to a greater or lesser extent; they all demonstrate a great debt to the new ways in which history was being conceptualized during the early modern period; and, most crucially, they all adapted images of the past for a variety of reasons—many of which were explicitly didactic and moral—just as their medieval predecessors did.

These texts thus operated in an environment that was actively engaged with its past in a way we do not fully understand. Certainly Tudor historians analyzed the past in a way that Geoffrey of Monmouth did not, for example; however, scholars are far from establishing a consensus on how that

6 Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 4.

7 F. J. Levy, *Tudor Historical Thought* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), ix.

engagement with the past operated, nor on how we should be considering questions arising from that engagement. Hayden White's 1978 *Tropics of Discourse* argued for an authorial process in history-writing that is fundamentally poetic, but he did not extend his analysis far back enough to detangle the complex web of concepts lying behind early modern usages of terms like "truth," "history," and "poetry." As a result, direct applications of some of White's concepts are inappropriate, as they can lead to an anachronistic gloss over what are complex and influential concepts. Despite this, White's sense of the poetic and of narrative in history-writing rings true for early modern texts ranging from Polydore Vergil's *Anglica historia* to Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* and beyond, as these texts demonstrate how early modern literary representations of history provide a nexus where a concurrent range of 'truths' about history interact.[8]

However, we are still far from establishing how we should deal with fiction and history. In the introduction to *Reading History in Early Modern England*, Daniel Woolf wrote that he was "not in the least concerned with [early modern historians'] interpretations of the past, their methods, their literary style, or even the social environment within which they wrote their texts."[9] This book demonstrates that these elements are not only interesting avenues for exploration (as so many scholars have shown, from Levy to Skinner and Greenblatt), but are indeed central to understanding even the most selective or abstracted features of Tudor history-writing; they cannot be ignored even in studies that focus on nonliterary aspects of early modern historical writing (or its reception).[10] This is because for Tudor writers and readers, history-writing was a lens through which they observed their contemporaries and understood both their past and present while looking to the future; it was a disputational tool applied to the most pressing moral and religious questions of the time; and it was a mechanism for authors to engage with the a wide range of social, political, and intellectual debates. Without considering the poetics of history-writing, we cannot hope to understand early modern English history or the art that depicts it.

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8 For more on Sidney and copia, see James A. Knapp, *Illustrating the Past in Early Modern England: The Representation of History in Printed Books* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003).

9 Daniel Woolf, *Reading History in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 6.

10 Skinner's landmark monograph *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978) is still the essential starting point for a discussion of the linguistic contexts of early modern historians, their conceptualizations of history (both as a broad concept and as a specific term), and the effect of their conceptualizations and determinative use of terminology. This is a discussion that has particular importance for writers like John Foxe, and it has not yet been adequately explored.

One of the many difficulties with this interdisciplinary approach to early modern history-writing is establishing a shared vocabulary specific enough to satisfy all requirements. We might struggle with foundational concepts like truth, but there are further problems even with more concrete terms. For example, modern scholarship refers to several of the writers in this corpus as historians, despite the Tudor practice of using "historian" and "historiographer" interchangeably. This is not just linguistic happenstance: for these early modern writers, the practice of writing history was bound up in demonstrating both *how* to write history and *why* history should be written. For example, John Bale was exhorting colleagues to "set forth the inglish chronicles in their right shappe" as early as 1544. Similarly, over four decades later Abraham Fleming argued in the 1587 edition of Holinshed's *Chronicles* that the historian must agree to "frankelie and boldlie speake" the truth. Both Bale's and Fleming's statements have been misinterpreted as an appeal to an objectivity that post-Rankean scholarship finds seductive.

The modern distinction drawn between labeling these writers as historians or historiographers has exacerbated these misinterpretations: for modern readers, to have John Foxe for example labeled as a historian implies an authorial impulse on Foxe's part to discover *res gestae*, to show his readers what an earlier world was like, to reveal how earlier Englishmen thought and felt in a way that connects them to the reader. This is particularly untrue for Foxe, but it is a fundamental misunderstanding of virtually all history-writing in this period. In an example particularly relevant for Foxe, historians and theological scholars have not made a strong enough case for understanding the interplay between the practice of writing history and the Reformist push toward *sola scriptura* exegetical practice in specific literary analyses of texts. This is particularly important when we consider the contempt Reformists demonstrated for the Roman Church's reliance on "unwritten verities": if Reformists were attacking the Roman Church for relying on traditions not evidenced in Scripture, how are we to understand their apparent readiness to utilize historical source material that was clearly untrue—or, even more to the point, that they were themselves actively fabricating?[11] While theologians like Thomas Cranmer were criticizing the Roman Church's historical development and use of tradition to supplement Scripture, Reformist historians were returning to the primary sources of both the Church's and England's histories, and yet were adapting those sources freely to conform to particular contemporary needs. These writers have been characterized as "compilers," but

11 For more on "unwritten verities," see Peter Marshall, *Religious Identities in Henry VIII's England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 81–99.

to describe them exclusively as assemblers of unoriginal material is to gloss over the creative processes that adapted previous material in myriad ways, as well as denying the evident interpolation of original work. This was not happenstance: as the feud between Richard Grafton and John Stow in the late sixteenth century demonstrates, an active debate about the methodologies associated with history-writing took place during this period. As we have seen from both Bale and Fleming, contributors and readers were encouraged to participate actively in this debate (or, more prosaically, to agree with particular authors and subsequently to buy their books).

The lack of precision when discussing history and historiography ties into a larger concern: it often leads to the implication that only historians can engage in the practice of writing history. As this corpus demonstrates, that is equally untrue: for contemporary audiences, representations of Henry VIII onstage were as valid as any found in a printed history. In this sense, William Shakespeare and John Fletcher are arguing against not just a perception of Wolsey that had become a caricature thanks in part to the efforts of historians, but are unsettling an entire methodology of adapting source material to suit polemical needs.[12] Their play does this by providing characterizations that are, in one sense, more realistic: Wolsey is not the bloated villian that Foxe makes him out to be. In another sense, the play is inaccurate: it cuts and pastes convenient moments from the chronology of Henry's reign, inventing and adapting freely to achieve a dramatic effect. George Cavendish does the same thing, despite explicitly setting out to correct the "lies" of historiographers. We should therefore understand that the early modern interchangeability between history and historiography reveals a different attitude—a far more flexible attitude—toward history, the writing of history, and writing about how to write about history: all of which are key features of any early modern text that discusses the past.[13]

We will see this trend evidenced throughout the texts presented in this book, and we will see how the necessity to provide a moral lesson often overrode the interests of accuracy as modern readers might understand it. Indeed, the moral lesson provided an accurate representation of history, even if the early modern reader might be aware that the *res gestae* were unlike their literary representations. Historical truth in the sixteenth century thus could mean several coexisting contradictory elements of a narrative; depending on the author and subgenre, this conceptual flexibility could be employed in several

12 For more information, see chapter 5 in this volume.

13 Judith H. Anderson, *Biographical Truth: The Representation of Historical Persons in Tudor-Stuart Writing* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 2.

ways. This issue requires that we recognize that the ways in which history was represented changed over the course of the sixteenth century. Yet the underlying conceptualization of what history was, how it should be transmitted, and to what purposes it could be put did not change nearly as quickly as has been previously thought.

The paradoxical conception and employment of historical moments (or participants) can be more fully appreciated when specific adaptations are placed in their horizontal and vertical contexts in as wide a variety of genres as is practicable. Thus in this study of Wolsey's characterizations, we cannot ignore Foxe's input: despite not operating exclusively as a life-writing exercise, the *Acts and Monuments* had an impact on Shakespeare and Fletcher's *Henry VIII, or, All Is True* that is critical to understanding that text. Not acknowledging that impact has cut off scholars from a new and rich reading of the play, as demonstrated in chapter 5. More important, it must be acknowledged that Foxe participated in a trend that goes back to John Skelton and *Rede Me*; to limit ourselves to a specific genre is to limit our understanding of how far this concept went in early modern England.

To demonstrate how this process was applied to Wolsey, let us return to our opening example. We have seen that Barlowe and Roy's text is not meant to be taken literally is made clear by the vivid description and analysis of a fictional coat of arms said to represent Wolsey.[14] These verses present a series of densely packed symbols which, for an early modern English readership, could not have failed to evoke Wolsey. Stephen Orgel has recently demonstrated that costume in early modern England had a much more determinative meaning than in modern society.[15] I extend that argument beyond the stage into public life: that is, that when an early modern Englishman or woman saw a cardinal's *galero*, that hat would not only have evoked emotional and spiritual associations with the Roman Church and its prelates, but it would have determined (or contributed to) an entire range of behaviors and beliefs both for viewer and wearer. When contemporary audiences saw Henry VIII depicted onstage in Samuel Rowley's *When You See Me, You Know Me* (or read it, following its publication in 1605), they did indeed know him to be Henry, with a variety of signifiers constructing a scaffold on which readers built their own conceptualizations of Henry: that these were so similar and enduring is a function of that monarch's iconic representations.

14 *Rede Me*, f. a1^{v}, ll. 15–28.

15 Stephen Orgel, *Spectacular Performances: Essays on Theatre, Imagery, Books and Selves in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), 42.

What was true for Henry was also true for Wolsey, and there are several reasons why we can be assured that connections between the symbols in *Rede Me* and Wolsey were made not just in 1528 but throughout the sixteenth century. First, Wolsey himself was the source of several of the most enduring images: most notably, the "Cardinals hatt." Wolsey aggressively promoted a connection between himself and his cardinal's *galero*, which he received from Rome in 1515. Despite the existence of a number of other politically active English cardinals throughout the late medieval and early modern period, images of a cardinal's hat in Tudor popular culture came to represent Wolsey almost exclusively. Wolsey's perceived feuds with the "white lion" of the Howards and the "swan" of the Staffords also is referenced; Henry's first minister feuding with two of the most important families in England would have had serious political ramifications and certainly would have been discussed keenly among courtiers and court watchers. Yet the satirical application of these images would not have been misunderstood to be Wolsey's actual coat-of-arms; rather, Barlowe and Roy were using charged images to transmit a truth about Wolsey that had little to do with *res gestae* in a modern sense.

The second reason why Wolsey was such a readily recognized figure throughout the sixteenth century was because of the repeated adoption, adaptation, and transmission of particular images and characterizations of Wolsey by authors across the sweep of the Tudor period. Some of these features—like the hat—were appropriated from the cardinal's self-figuring. Others, usually satirical in nature, were often generalized insults or commonplaces that came to represent Wolsey specifically through repeated application throughout the century. Simply calling Wolsey a "dog" was hardly a specific insult in itself; however, even as early as 1528, Barlowe and Roy's calling Wolsey a "mastif Curre" linked *Rede Me* to a number of preexisting and contemporary anti-Wolsey satires, and would help to lay a foundation for further negative characterizations throughout the sixteenth century and beyond.[16] I show that sixteenth-century characterizations of Wolsey were not merely part of a chronological series; they participated consciously in a process of adoption and adaptation in producing images of the cardinal, a process that demonstrates how a variety of literary Wolseys were utilized throughout the century to engage with contemporary events. This in turn demonstrates, albeit in a focused way, the variety of ways in which Tudor writers played with readers' understanding of past events, places, and people to achieve a particular moral, political, religious, or artistic purpose.

16 *Rede Me*, f. a1^{v}, l. 20.

The characterizations found in this book fall into three periods. The first—which extends roughly from 1514 to 1530 and in which we find texts like *Rede Me*, John Skelton's anti-Wolsey satires, and *Godly Queene Hester*—treats Wolsey as a satirical object: a living religious and political figure who could be satirized in the hopes of affecting events during Wolsey's lifetime. During this period, particular commonplace images and metaphors began to be applied to Wolsey with increasing frequency until the cardinal was readily associated with these features. The second period, which extends from 1530 to 1587, contains texts that demonstrate a shift from discussions of Wolsey as a man to Wolsey as a topic of discourse, relevant in its application to contemporary events. George Cavendish, whose *Metrical Visions* and *Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey* appeared during this era, sought to combat what he identified as inaccuracies (and, in some cases, blatant slurs and mistruths) in the early Tudor chronicles of Polydore Vergil and Edward Hall; he felt he had the authority to do so by virtue of his firsthand witnessing of Wolsey's final years. Despite Cavendish's efforts, these chronicles began a process of discoursing Wolsey, which was adopted and expanded by the late Tudor chroniclers (represented in this study by Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* and Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles*). It is during this period that we find some of the more improbable anecdotes about Wolsey coupled with sensationalized descriptions and depictions. The third period, which extends from 1587 to the modern day, considers Wolsey not just as an object of discourse, but as emblematic of the problem of early modern representation itself. Shakespeare and Fletcher's Wolsey in *Henry VIII* wonders if his enemies and the ignorant will write the chronicle of his life and deeds, which neatly raises a concern with how best to represent history itself that emerged in the sixteenth century. This change both arose from and caused many of the changing attitudes toward history and historical figures, and developed in an evolutionary fashion alongside many of the social changes that took place in the sixteenth century. "Evolutionary" is an apt term here; as this book demonstrates, some texts and textual features did not prove popular and were not adopted by later authors. But, as we have already seen in *Rede Me*, some features associated with Wolsey attracted interest and were imitated and adapted throughout the century.

This volume is concerned with Wolsey not because of the man and his actions—either perceived or attested—but because Wolsey represents an opportunity to trace how authors with disparate views represented moments and figures from history throughout a rapidly changing century. During the reigns of the Tudors, England went from being a bulwark of the papacy (as evidenced in part by the existence of Henry VIII's 1521 *Assertio septem sacramentorum*) to a hotbed of Reformist culture rivaling anything found on the

European mainland; it saw that culture splinter into a variety of competing factions, the brief (but certainly significant) return of Roman orthodoxy during Mary I's reign, and the subsequent uncertain reformation(s) of the English church under Elizabeth I. As the last Roman clergyman to hold the Lord Chancellorship in England in addition to his cardinalate, Wolsey attracted criticism and commentary from evangelicals as well as a range of disaffected conservatives. This interest was not exclusively religious: because of Wolsey's extraordinary centrality to the Henrician government, much of the literature about him is also concerned with his secular roles. These questions about corruption, class consciousness, and Machiavellian realpolitik were expressed in conjunction with concerns about the influence of foreign powers on the nascent English nation-state. Edward Hall criticized Wolsey not just for his unpopular policies or beliefs, but—as was the case with the Amicable Grant of 1525—that these policies were conducted privately, and that privacy is the enemy of just governance.[17] This fear is a common theme throughout English (and European) history, but by looking at representations of Wolsey, we can see how authors connected these fears (as seen through the lens of the Reformation, from all religious perspectives) to Wolsey and to broader questions about how truth and history might (or ought to) be represented.

Thus, this volume does not discuss Wolsey in a strictly historical or biographical sense, but instead fills a gap in current scholarship by considering the motivations and mechanisms that produced such intensely negative characterizations of the cardinal that even after more than four hundred years after his death, the dominant popular image of Wolsey is still overwhelmingly of a bloated and cunning Machiavellian politician.[18] A number of studies have done a great deal to uncover biographical information about Wolsey, of which Peter Gwyn's *The King's Cardinal* is most authoritative. There also have been an array of examinations of particular representations of Wolsey (often placed within considerations of Cavendish's *Life*) or his political life and legacy. Perhaps most similar to this work is Stella Fletcher's recent *Cardinal Wolsey: A Life in Renaissance Europe*, which discusses Wolsey's biography as well as depictions of the cardinal up to the present day. Fletcher's monograph is an excellent resource for surveying Wolsey's life and posthumous legacy, but

17 Thomas Betteridge, *Tudor Histories of the English Reformation*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 57.

18 As evidenced in the 2010 Royal Shakespeare Company production of *Henry VIII* at the Globe Theatre (see chapter 5).

differs from this one in that it focuses on the historical figure himself, rather than on the literary characters found in this corpus.

Beyond this specific issue, all of these works, while valuable for the achievement of their respective aims, did not seek to provide a comprehensive study of how particular images of their subjects were generated and how those images were applied to a variety of purposes. Through placing this books in such scholarly context, we can see how the representations of Wolsey have a much broader significance than just one man and his posthumous reputation: we can better understand how a wide range of Tudor and Jacobean authors conceptualized and represented history itself.

Why Wolsey?

This book takes as its structure a series of chronological comparisons designed to draw out the manner in which early modern English writers used the past to talk about their present. As such, any number of texts, figures, or features illustrate—in part—the same processes and motivations I describe here. That texts exhibit changing attitudes toward public figures is not a novel idea by any means, and similar examinations of the papacy, of royal ministers, or of foreign rulers would be of real utility. But Wolsey has been selected to feature as the exclusive subject of this case study because his representations demonstrate the evolutionary process I describe more clearly than any other single subject or group of subjects. Wolsey lived and died at the very start of an unprecedented age in English or European political, religious, and literary history; the ways in which his representations were adopted and shaped throughout this period were therefore unique, and uniqueness deserves investigation.

Beyond his times, Wolsey is a figure that defies straightforward comparison. His wealth, political influence, and ecclesiastic authority placed him among grand families like the Medicis and the great cardinal-princes of France, Italy, and the Holy Roman Empire; his birth, education, and training located him firmly in the burgeoning Tudor bureaucracy of Henry VII. His closest English political analogues were men he himself trained, Stephen Gardiner and Thomas Cromwell: one a consummate survivor like Wolsey, and the other, another commoner whose abilities endeared him to a capricious king. But Gardiner did not approach Wolsey's lofty authority nor enjoyed his international standing, and Cromwell's oppositional religious beliefs and civic contexts make comparisons to Wolsey shaky. Other roughly contemporary figures exhibit similarities, and we should bear in mind that many of the tropes and images used to describe Wolsey could be—and often were—applied to others.

It is not that Wolsey was unique among Tudor political figures by virtue of his being satirized; rather, Wolsey is unique because of the manner in which his public images came to be utilized for a variety of purposes long after his death. It is for this reason that Wolsey serves as an ideal focal point for examining how Tudor writers characterized political figures, their motivations for doing so, and how these mechanisms and motivations evolved in response to the social, political, and religious changes that took place in sixteenth-century England.

Speaking Nothing but Truth: Problems, Structure, and Subject

One of the difficulties with a study of this nature is highlighted by reading the various extant accounts of Wolsey's death. George Cavendish—who was present at the event—describes a pious end, with Wolsey gently expiring after denying himself food on a fast day, and his body lying in Leicester Abbey on display for a week. His final words are devoted to urging his listeners to guard against the new Lutheran heresies and the rebellions that have historically coincided with religious upheaval, and he was discovered to have been wearing a hair shirt under his finery: a secret he had kept even from Cavendish.[19] By contrast, John Foxe's account of Wolsey's death is heavily loaded with unholy imagery, describing a blackened and bloated corpse being tipped into its grave by guttering torchlight in the dead of night.[20] Naturally, both cannot be true in a literal sense (not least of all because they directly contradict each other): rather, they demonstrate how Wolsey's public image was utilized for a broad range of purposes, and how differing interpretations of truthfulness during this period unsettle attempts to recreate a purely factual timeline of events that reveals the impact of the event and its narratives in early modern England. This issue reveals the concern with representations of truth that lies at the heart of this study. Accounts of Wolsey's life and career were coopted by writers even during Wolsey's own lifetime, and this process continued well after his death.

Due to Wolsey's centrality to the Henrician government, it is perhaps unsurprising that there are a large number of contemporary and near-contemporary texts concerning the cardinal. Necessity dictates that not all can be discussed here, so a selection of core texts spanning the sixteenth century were identified to act as exemplars. They have been chosen to act as stepping-stones across

19 Cavendish, George, *The Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey*, ed. Richard Sylvester (London: Early English Text Society by Oxford University Press, 1959), 180–181.

20 See chapter 3.

the sixteenth century, each demonstrating in an emblematic fashion a new characterization of Wolsey or a response to, or adaptation of, a previous figuring. Chapter 1 considers how the early Tudor laureate John Skelton (c. 1460–1529) took generalized satirical features and applied them to Wolsey with increasing vitriol and clarity from 1515 until 1523, when he conducted an apparent about-face and identified Wolsey as his patron, highlighting issues of poetic liberty and the quest for patronage. In applying general insults to those royal advisers he saw as unscrupulous (of which Wolsey was decidedly foremost after 1515), Skelton came to increase gradually both the strength of his invective and his focus on Wolsey. As a result, the terms and images Skelton adapted to fit Wolsey began to be identified increasingly with the cardinal: establishing an anti-Wolsey lexicon and beginning a process that would continue throughout the sixteenth century.

Beginning with *Against Venemous Tongues* (1516), followed by *Magnyfycence* (c. 1516), *Speke, Parott* (c. 1521), *Collyn Clout* (c. 1522–1523), *Why Come Ye Nat to Courte?* (1522), *The Garland of Laurell* (1523), *The Douty Duke of Albany* (1523), and *A Replycacion* (1528), this chapter identifies how each text demonstrates the evolution of Skelton's characterization of Wolsey. The chapter finishes with analysis of the anonymous Henrician satire *Godly Queene Hester* (c. 1529). *Hester* is closely linked with Skelton and has occasionally been labeled (likely erroneously) as a product of Skelton's.[21] It owes much to *Magnyfycence* in particular, and this chapter uses the similarities between these two texts to reinforce both the argument that *Magnyfycence* is an anti-Wolsey text (and was certainly viewed this way after Wolsey's death, when it was first printed) and to demonstrate the substantial debt owed by the *Hester* author to Skelton. It is essential to note that though *Hester* owes much to Skelton, it is a distinct text and features innovative adaptations of those earlier anti-Wolsey images. The inclusion of *Hester* demonstrates how subsequent authors adapted Skelton's early characterizations, reflecting the continuing market for anti-Wolsey satire in the years immediately following the cardinal's fall.

There was a substantial volume of anti-Wolsey literature that appeared during Wolsey's fall from power and in the decades after his death, ranging from Barlowe and Roy's *Rede me and bee nott wrothe*, printed in 1528, to Thomas Churchyard's Wolsey poem in the 1587 edition of the *Mirror for Magistrates*. The presence of these critical texts and a lack of oppositional pro-Wolsey texts indicate that Wolsey's reputation had suffered considerably in the period following his death to the point that Wolsey was increasingly being singled out as one of the most vilified men in England. One of the most significant groups of

21 Greg Walker, *Plays of Persuasion: Drama and Politics at the Court of Henry VIII* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 102.

anti-Wolsey literature came in the form of the humanist histories that began to develop early in Henry VIII's reign. Polydore Vergil and Edward Hall wrote two of the earliest: Vergil's *Anglica historia* was first printed in 1534, though material on Wolsey did not appear until the third edition of 1555; Hall's *Chronicle* (*The Vnion of the Two Noble and Illustre Famelies of Lancastre and Yorke*) was printed in 1542. The presence of these emerging histories meant that the reading public was being given a new opportunity to develop an awareness of the actions attributed to historical figures (including Wolsey) in far more detail (and with vastly more elaborate analyses) than had been provided the monastic and civic chronicles that had been written for centuries. That the characterizations of Wolsey found in these accounts were overwhelmingly negative reinforced the already-dominant negative images of the cardinal present in the public mind.

It was in this atmosphere—and in response to these attitudes—that George Cavendish (1494–c. 1562) wrote his *Metrical Visions* (c. 1552–1558) and *Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey* (c. 1554–1558), discussed in chapter 2. Cavendish served as Wolsey's gentleman-usher for the final decade of the cardinal's life and witnessed both the major diplomatic triumphs of the early 1520s and Wolsey's sudden fall from power firsthand. However, little literary analysis has been conducted on these texts, and few of Cavendish's sources or motivations have been scrutinized. In addition, the *Life* has largely eclipsed the *Metrical Visions* in modern scholarship, leaving a substantial gap in the treatment of Cavendish's work. These two texts provide readers with rare mid-century defenses of Wolsey in poetry and prose, both constructed around a didactic *de casibus* framework. These are defensive texts and demonstrate a clear respect for the fallen cardinal, but they are far from obsequious: instead, they attempt to provide a comparatively balanced view of Wolsey's strengths and flaws as part of a moral warning to readers against indulging in sinful pride. This chapter sets these two texts against the previous examples of anti-Wolsey literature and by doing so illuminates how Cavendish was struggling to work against a rising and increasingly codified tide of negative public images of Wolsey.

Despite his efforts to write these texts, it is unclear to what extent Cavendish intended the *Life* and *Metrical Visions* to be published. The *Life* appears to have circulated reasonably widely in manuscript, but the *Metrical Visions* are extant in only one holograph collection (British Library MS Egerton 2402) and one substantial manuscript copy (Bodleian MS Dugdale 28).[22] Though there is

22 *The Catalogue of English Literary Manuscripts* identifies fifty-four early modern manuscript copies of the *Life*; of the *Metrical Visions* only three, comprising the two named above and a further fragment in British Library MS Additional 14410.

evidence that the *Life* had some impact on later histories, Cavendish did not appear to push either text into the public with any vigor. Its cultural impact may also have been limited in part due to the religious turmoil of the mid-Tudor period. Moderate conservatives (including those open to reform within the Roman Church) were unwilling to embrace Wolsey because of his lack of effective ecclesiastic reforms as well as his monastic suppressions and conglomeration of Church offices.[23] Reformists viewed Wolsey as the antithesis of a godly Church leader due to his secular interactions and (admittedly somewhat limited) suppressions of Reformist texts and preachers. In addition, both sides of the spectrum appear to have taken exception with his public displays of his enormous wealth.

Chapter 3 focuses on the martyrologist John Foxe's seminal *Acts and Monuments* and considers how Foxe used rumor, hyperbole, and fiery polemic to turn Wolsey from an object of satirical ridicule into a metonym for all the perceived evils of the Roman Church. For the first time, Wolsey came to represent far more than just an immoral and overproud churchman: for Foxe and his contemporaries, a hyperbolized Wolsey stood for the greedy, pompous, and ungodly misinterpretations promoted by the pope, and played a central propagandist role in the struggle to maintain the Reformation in Elizabethan England. This text demonstrates conclusively that although Wolsey had died decades before, his legacy had been appropriated for a variety of purposes that had little to do with Wolsey's personal reputation, and marks Wolsey's posthumous transition from historical figure to literary character. I use the four editions of the *Acts and Monuments* produced during Foxe's lifetime (in 1563, 1570, 1576, and 1583) to analyze how Foxe appropriated previous material and adapted it over the course of those four editions.[24]

Chapter 4 looks at Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*, which first appeared in 1577 and was heavily revised and republished in 1587. The *Chronicles* is roughly similar in scope and organization to the *Acts and Monuments*, but while Foxe was writing an ecclesiastic history of the English church, Holinshed and his associates were endeavoring to create a secular history. To ascribe the *Chronicles* to Holinshed alone (1529–1580) is overly simplistic, however; Holinshed was the lead figure for the 1577 edition, but he had a number of assistants, primarily William Harrison (1535–1593) and Richard Stanihurst (1547–1618), who helped Holinshed collate and edit

23 Mike Pincombe, "A Place in the Shade: George Cavendish and *de casibus* tragedy," in *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 385.

24 John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments . . . The Variorum Edition*, (Sheffield: Humanities Research Institute Online, 1563, 1570, 1576, 1583). www.hrionline.ac.uk/johnfoxe/. Note on pagination: I have provided page references as modernized by the John Foxe Project.

contributions from a wide range of texts and authors. The 1587 edition was compiled and printed after Holinshed's death in 1580 by Abraham Fleming (c. 1552–1607). Fleming made substantial editorial revisions and significantly expanded the *Chronicles*; as a result, the 1587 edition is distinctly different in tone and content from the 1577 edition. One similarity between these two editions is that they both relied on external contributors: as a result, the *Chronicles* is a patchwork collection of opinions and motivations, which Holinshed and Fleming did not shape into a homogenous narrative. As this chapter shows, they both chose instead to weigh denominational and geopolitical concerns against stylistic and historiographical motivations. Although many parallels exist between the *Chronicles* and the *Acts and Monuments* (which is reflected in the similar approach to both texts adopted by this study), their goals and resulting influence were markedly different. This chapter considers the authorial and editorial mechanisms that distinguish the *Chronicles* both from previous histories and from each other as discrete editions, a feature often overlooked by scholars.

The *Chronicles* is particularly well-known to literary scholars, though few have made it the focus of study. This is because the *Chronicles* was famously employed by William Shakespeare as a reference for the majority of his history plays, including *Henry VIII*, *Richard II, Henry IV 1* and *2*, *Henry V, Henry VI 1, 2*, and *3*, and *Richard III*, as well as *King Lear*. In chapter 5, I use Shakespeare and Fletcher's *Henry VIII: or, All Is True* to provide a summative case study of how Wolsey was represented after the end of the Tudor dynasty. *Henry VIII* is an unusual play, known primarily for its pageantry (and for having burned down the Globe during its inaugural performance in 1613); however, it has generally been derided for a lack of otherwise interesting features, with drama critic Charles Spencer calling the play "inert."[25]

Although it does not stick exclusively to the historical record, the play broadly follows a series of narrative arcs charting the falls of the duke of Buckingham, Cardinal Wolsey, and Katherine of Aragon, followed by the birth of Elizabeth I. Historically, directors have cast Wolsey as a Machiavellian schemer, engineering the execution of Buckingham and the king's divorce. By contrast, this chapter proposes a reassessment of Wolsey's character in the play. Major productions have focused on Wolsey as a villain, despite textual opportuni-

25 Gordon McMullan's introduction to William Shakespeare and John Fletcher, *King Henry VIII*, ed. Gordon McMullan (London: Arden, 2000), 9. See also Charles Spencer, "Henry VIII at Shakespeare's Globe, Review", *Telegraph*, 25 May 2010, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/theatre-reviews/7764638/Henry-VIII-at-Shakespeares-Globe-review.html.

ties for presenting a more nuanced character. Instead, Jacobean and modern audiences alike have been presented with images of what Garrett Mattingly described in 1942 as an "unwieldy hulk of corrupted flesh bearing perilously the supple, powerful, brain, a demoniac incandescence of ambition and pride driving and lighting from within the bloated, rotting body."[26] By closely reading and analyzing Wolsey's in-text reputation and characterizations (by himself, friends, and enemies) and juxtaposing these against his on-stage actions, we can see clearly that Wolsey can easily be portrayed as the victim of the jealousies and misapprehensions of his noble counterparts. That this textual opportunity has not yet been taken up by any major production—coupled with a lack of scholarly recognition—signals in part the extent to which the negative portrayals of Wolsey developed in the sixteenth century have dominated the public image of the cardinal until the present day.

These diverse authors and texts have been selected intentionally to act as stepping-stones that demonstrate how Wolsey was characterized, how these characterizations evolved over the course of the sixteenth century, and how they reflect the social, political, and religious changes that took place during the Tudor dynasty. That this multiplicity of voices was expressed in such a wide range of genres—ranging from popular Skeltonic poetry to the state-sponsored history—provides us with an ideal opportunity to see the process by which history was made in Tudor England.

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26 Garrett Mattingly, *Catherine of Aragon* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1942), 172. Quoted in Stella Fletcher, *Cardinal Wolsey: A Life in Renaissance Europe* (London: Continuum, 2009), 192.

CHAPTER 1

Rayling and Scoffery: Henrician Portrayals of Cardinal Wolsey

The earliest literary images of Cardinal Wolsey are difficult to date with a satisfying degree of specificity, but almost certainly began appearing in 1514–1515 as Wolsey rose from a royal almonership to a bishopric and subsequently to the Chancellorship and the Archbishopric of York. Though Wolsey's increasing centrality in the Court must have been discussed for several years prior to his rapid accumulations of high offices, it is only in this period that we begin to see the emergence of literary texts that figure Wolsey. When discussing early Henrician literary images of Cardinal Wolsey in any context, the works of John Skelton must figure prominently. When the field of study is restricted to poetic texts, Skelton's works stand out from contemporary satires and literature of complaint.[1] This is partially because Skelton billed himself as an unique talent, seeking to capitalize on his laureateship and his prior relationship with the young Henry VIII. Skelton made extensive use of commonplaces in his political poetry, which he—and increasingly, his readers—adapted to fit the changing political landscape in Tudor England; these commonplaces proved to be so particularly fitting with the public considerations of Wolsey that Skelton's applications of these commonplaces became the predominant representations of the cardinal for the entirety of the sixteenth century. Skelton's portrayals of Wolsey (or the subsequent adoption and application of those images by readers) thrived despite Skelton's fluctuating reputation. George Puttenham included Skelton in his list of significant English poets, but condemned Skelton as a "sharpe Satirist, but with more rayling and scoffery than became a Poet Lawreat."[2] Skelton's critics focused largely on the form of the Skeltonic, which in turn reflects the more ready availability of the Skeltonic poems. Despite this rather dismissive stance, it is clear that Skelton's works enjoyed some popularity during his lifetime and after the poet's death in 1529. The general trend in the publishing of his texts across the sixteenth century tended toward decline; however, there was at least enough market interest to maintain a moderate level of general public awareness about Skelton. Particularly in the mid-1550s a

1 John Scattergood, *John Skelton: The Career of an Early English Poet* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2014), 281–282.

2 George Puttenham, *The arte of English poesie* (London: Richard Field, 1589), 50.

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number of prominent printers—including John Day, Wynkyn de Worde, John Rastell, William Rastell, Thomas Marshe, and Richard Pynson—published new editions of Skelton's works that helped to sustain Skelton's influence on mid- to late-Tudor literature. This modest popularity helped to diffuse images in Skelton's works throughout the public consciousness: these images—which Skelton himself may or may not consciously have attached to Wolsey—came to represent the cardinal.

Though Skelton's reputation was rather mixed by the end of the sixteenth century partially as a result of critics like Puttenham, it is clear that he was considered a significant poet throughout the Tudor period. Skelton's popularity can be traced through more subtle or obscure references as well as the sustained interest in publishing Skelton's works.[3] John Bale's 1557–1559 *Catalogus* (*Scriptorum illustrium maioris britanniae catalogus*) mentions Skelton in the august company of writers like Gower, Lydgate, Tyndale, and More, but it was John Stow's edition of 1568 (titled *Pithy, Pleasaunt and Profitable Workes*) that first attempted to make available a substantial portion of Skelton's works.[4] Stow's edition became the standard edition of Skelton until Alexander Dyce's significantly expanded 1843 edition, which included a large number of works that had previously only circulated in limited fashion (either in manuscript or in smaller printed collections). The production of Stow's edition (along with the numerous smaller editions printed throughout the mid- and late-Tudor period) indicates an interest in Skelton's poetry continuing for decades after the poet's death: a public awareness that maintained itself throughout the length of the Tudor period and well into the Jacobean period. This reasonably moderate level of public interest is further supported by the numerous posthumous printings and reissuings of various individual poems or small collections, most notably the first print editions of *Magnyfycence* (John Rastell, c. 1530) and *Collyn Clout* (Thomas Godfray, 1531); *Certayne Bokes,* Richard Lant's c. 1545 collection of several poems including *Speke, Parott*; and numerous editions of

3 Editions of Skelton's poems printed between 1499(?) and 1624 available via the English Short Title Catalogue number thirty-four (including collections of poems, but not including editions attributed to Skelton during the early modern period), with the most numerous editions being of *Colin Clout* (seven editions), *Philip Sparrow* (six editions), and *Why come ye nat to courte?* (six editions). These figures should be understood in a rough fashion; for comparison, the Short Title Catalogue itself counts four editions of *Collyn Clout*; three of *Why Come Ye Nat To Courte?*; and three of *Philip Sparrow*, for example.

4 James Simpson, *Reform and Cultural Revolution*, vol. 2 of *The Oxford English Literary History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 23. See also John Bale, *Scriptorum illustrium maioris britanniae catalogus* (Basel: Joannes Oporinus, 1557–1559).

texts like *Why Come Ye Nat To Courte?*, *Philip Sparrow*, and *Collyn Clout.*[5] In addition to the continued interest in Skelton's works themselves, there was a mid-century spate of imitators and admirers of Skelton and of the Skeltonic, most notably Luke Shepherd's Skeltonic satires of the 1540s.[6] The 1561 publishing of the anonymous interlude *Godly Queen Hester* is also significant in that the interlude has often been supposed to have been written by Skelton himself.[7] There is evidence showing the influence of the Skeltonic on religious protest poetry, with imitations and allusions to Skelton's poetry extending as late as the anonymously authored *A Skeltonicall Salutation* (1589), an anti-Catholic text celebrating the defeat of the Spanish Armada, and beyond to Arthur Dent's *Plaine Man's Pathway to Heaven* (1601).[8]

A more substantial reference is found in Edmund Spenser's 1579 *Shepheardes Calendar*, which takes its narrator Colin Clout directly from Skelton's *Collyn Clout.* While Spenser's Clout serves a markedly different purpose to Skelton's, the visions touch on several themes that would have evoked sympathy in Skelton's own Collyn Clout:

> Some gan to gape for greedie governaunce,
> And match them selfe with mighty potentates,
> Lovers of Lordship and troublers of states:
> . . . Tho under colour of shepheards, somewhile
> There crept in Wolves, ful of fraude and guile,
> That often devoured their owne sheepe,
> And often the shepheards, that did hem keepe.[9]

This excerpt uses pastoral images to connect corrupt priests with wolves that devour both sheep and shepherds; indeed, Shakespeare himself has the Duke of Buckingham reference this same commonplace when speaking about Wolsey in *Henry VIII*:

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5 Robert S. Kinsman, *John Skelton, Early Tudor Laureate: An Annotated Bibliography, c. 1488–1977* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1979), 15–25.

6 For more on Shepherd's Skeltonic satires, see Luke Shepherd, *An Edition of Luke Shepherd's Satires*, ed. Janice Devereux (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2001).

7 Kinsman, 24.

8 For more information, see Jane Griffiths, *John Skelton and Poetic Authority: Defining the Liberty to Speak* (Oxford: Oxford English Monographs, 2006).

9 Edmund Spenser, "Maye," in *Shepheardes Calendar* (London: Hugh Singleton, 1579), 19–20.

> This holy fox,
> Or wolf, or both—for he is equal rav'nous
> As he is subtle, and as prone to mischief,
> As able to perform't. (1.1.158–161)

Nearly a full century after Skelton's death, Ben Jonson used the Skeltonic in three masques dating from the early 1620s.[10] It is clear then that while Skelton may not have enjoyed an overwhelmingly popular posthumous reputation, his texts and stylistic elements were readily adopted by diverse authors in the century following his death.

Though Skelton had a traceable influence on other authors on a variety of subjects, one of the key aspects of his legacy was the application of commonplaces to Cardinal Wolsey, which were mostly—but not exclusively—negative. These commonplaces were adapted by Skelton (and subsequently by later authors) to more specifically relate to Wolsey; in time, these commonplaces came to represent Wolsey with increasing specificity and fixity. This chapter considers Skelton's Wolsey characterizations broadly organized into three categories: the early satires (those written prior to 1520), the established anti-Wolsey satires, and the pro-Wolsey poems. It then goes on to discuss the anonymous interlude *Godly Queene Hester* (c. 1529), a secular morality play with many connections to Skelton (and, in particular, to Skelton's *Magnyfycence*). By analyzing these poems in this chronological fashion, we can see how Skelton's images reveal three equally important elements of these early Henrician texts: first, that Skelton's poetry engaged closely with contemporary politics and the public, though his intentions appear inconsistent. Second, Skelton's Wolsey poetry and poetic features evolved over the period 1515–1529, which largely indicates the growing anti-Wolsey trend which would become dominant by Wolsey's death in 1530. Third, Skelton's anti-Wolsey texts left a poetic legacy which is best exemplified by *Godly Queene Hester*, a play which both demonstrates that legacy and reveals new elements of Skelton's works in retrospect.

Most of Skelton's Wolsey images are taken from his anti-Wolsey satires (or supposed anti-Wolsey satires). These poems were produced toward the end of the poet's career: *Against Venemous Tongues* (c. 1516), *Magnyfycence* (c. 1516), *Speke, Parott* (c. 1521), *Collyn Clout* (1522), and *Why Come Ye Nat to Courte?* (1522). These texts represent a gradual move toward open criticism

10 Griffiths, 170–181. The masques she identifies are *The Gypsies Metamorphos'd* (1621), *The Masque of Owls* (1624), and *The Fortunate Isles* (1624).

of the cardinal; or, at the very least, were viewed as criticism of Wolsey in hindsight after the death of both poet and cardinal, as we will see below. However, it must be recalled that not all of Skelton's poetry was anti-Wolsey satire. Setting aside the substantial amount of poetic material that is simply unrelated to Wolsey, we must also consider Skelton's texts that were authorized or patronized by Wolsey toward the end of the poet's life. The change from antagonistic satire to (apparently) generous praise is sudden; only a few months after writing *Why Come Ye Nat to Courte?*, Skelton dedicated his self-laudatory *The Garlande of Laurell* to Wolsey, with high praise for the cardinal. This reversal has fuelled much speculation about Skelton's quest for patronage, his religious beliefs, and his personal relationship with Wolsey; as a result, most Skelton scholarship has focused on this period of Skelton's life to the detriment of study of his earlier works. After this abrupt change, Skelton's works remained positive about the cardinal until the poet's death; I discuss elements from *The Garland of Laurell* (1523), *The Douty Duke of Albany* (1523), and *A Replycacion* (1528) that can be utilized to consider elements of his earlier work.

Against Venemous Tongues and *Magnyfycence:* Early Anti-Wolsey Texts

Against Venemous Tongues and *Magnyfycence* in particular present an opportunity to see how Skelton's texts were interpreted by the author, by publishers, and by the public. Both these texts were written in a more subtle vein than the later, explicit anti-Wolsey satires; as a result, scholarly consensus on the targets of these texts has not been established. This section will demonstrate how both texts are fundamentally concerned with Wolsey, however; Skelton extrapolates Wolsey's worrying tendencies toward self-aggrandizement and presents his satires as warnings against the typological "bad adviser" he fears Wolsey will become. *Against Venemous Tongues*, probably composed in late 1515 or 1516, has been discussed rather less than *Magnyfycence*, for a variety of reasons. *Magnyfycence* represents the first extant secular morality play in English. This innovative feature alone makes it worthy of examination, setting aside the satirical focus of the play. By comparison, *Against Venemous Tongues* has often been dismissed as less than good poetry: H. L. R. Edwards described it as "an obscure and rather dull little poem."[11] Only a very few scholars have given the poem any substantial treatment, and there has been a lack of

11 Edwards, 163.

scholarly consensus regarding the target of the poem.[12] Despite the difficulties in conclusively identifying Wolsey as the focus of the satire, *Against Venemous Tongues* represents an excellent starting point for analyzing Skelton's images of Wolsey because in it Skelton employs several categories of images and stylistic features, to which he returns repeatedly throughout his more clearly defined anti-Wolsey corpus: of these, clothing and poison/venomous creatures are most common. However, in the final lines of the poem Skelton also mentions "Cerberus the cur": the first negative dog image found in a Skelton poem possibly associated with Wolsey and representative of a trope which would come to mark Wolsey indelibly. *Against Venemous Tongues* therefore marks a starting point for Skelton's anti-Wolsey satire, where we can see the poet begin to apply commonplaces against a shadowy presence at Court that later resolves into the cardinal.

Critical arguments about Wolsey's presence in the text tend to center on the first category of images, clothing. This textual element, which appears early in the poem, would resurface throughout Skelton's later poems and became one of the most common themes identified with Wolsey throughout the sixteenth century. The key image in this category is servants' livery; Skelton contrasts the attention paid to the holy symbols on Wolsey's servants' livery with Wolsey's lack of concern with his spiritual duties. That Skelton was criticizing overwrought livery is made plain by his Latin statement preceding the stanza, which reads, "Hic notat purpuraria arte intextas literas Romanas in amictibus post ambulonum ante et retro."[13] Having made clear that the following section is explicitly about livery, Skelton continues on to point out the hypocrisy evidenced by such behavior:

> For before on your brest, and behind on your back
> In Romaine letters I never founde lack
> In your crosse rowe nor Christ chrosse you spede,
> Your Pater noster, your Ave, nor your Crede.
> Who soever that tale unto you tolde,
> He saith untruly, to say that I would

12 For those supporting the theory of Wolsey as a target, see Edwards, 165; Kinney, 124; Scattergood, 431; Scattergood, *John Skelton: The Career of an Early Tudor Poet*, 210–212. For Pollet's argument, see 82–83 of his monograph. For opposition to this theory, see Griffiths, 187–188.

13 *Against Venemous Tongues*, l. 137. Translation from Scattergood as follows: "Here he refers to Roman letters woven in bright colours on the front and back of liveries of followers." Scattergood, 431.

> Controlle the cognisaunce of noble men
> Either by language or with my pen.[14]

Here Skelton is referencing Wolsey's penchant for dressing his servants in elaborate livery; in particular, he required his servants' livery to bear the letters "T" and "C" (for *Thomas Cardinalis*) on their fronts and backs.[15] It has been hypothesized that Skelton was not criticizing the livery for its ostentation, as it was expected that great men would dress their servants in such a manner as to demonstrate their wealth and station. This argument centers on the reader's interpretation of the word "lack" as meaning "blame" in line 17.[16] However, the *Oxford English Dictionary* cites only one remotely contemporaneous usage agreeing with this definition, found in Nicolas Udall's *Apophthegmes*, which he translated into English in 1542 and was published in 1563.[17] By comparison, the more common meaning of "lack"—"Deficiency, want, need (of something desirable or necessary)"—appears three times in the *Oxford English Dictionary* in the period from 1500 to 1548, citing William Dunbar, Sir Thomas More and Sir John Cheke.[18] It therefore seems more likely that Skelton simply meant that the livery had "Romain letters" on them and that Wolsey paid more attention to these marks of status than he did to his religious duties. Regardless of which sense of "lack" Skelton meant, the lines that follow retain the same meaning. Skelton finds fault with his subject's ignorance of and lack of attention to basic religious elements: "In your cross-row nor Christ-cross you spede, / Your Paternoster, your Ave nor your Crede."[19] The point the poet makes with this juxtaposition is that while Wolsey has eagerly embraced the symbols and trappings of his new legatine role, he has neglected even the most basic religious duties of his office.

The second category of imagery is thematically based on poison or venomous animals. This theme is represented most strongly in the title of the poem itself, *Against Venemous Tongues*, and is used primarily to support the argument that the power of a liar or slanderer far exceeds anything else found in nature:

> Malicious tunges, though they have no bones,
> Are sharper than swordes, sturdier then stones.

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14 *Against Venemous Tongues*, ll. 16–23

15 Kinney, 125.

16 Edwards, 164.

17 *OED*, "lack," 2b.

18 *OED*, "lack," 3.

19 *Against Venemous Tongues*, ll. 18–19.

> *Lege Philostratum de vita Tyanei Apollonii.*[20]
> Sharper than raysors, that shave and cut throtes,
> More stinging then scorpions that stang Pharaotis.
> *Venenum aspidum sub labiis eorum. Ps.*
> More venomous and much more virulent
> Than any poisoned tode, or any serpent.[21]

Skelton combines a plea to God with a series of comparisons; he lists evocative images which, though terrible themselves, are not as dangerous as a false tongue. Key among these images are the venomous toads and snakes, whose forked tongues in particular created an evocative parallel between the poisonous animals and the dangerous words of evil men. The Latin text "Venenum aspidum sub labiis eorum" is significant; here Skelton is quoting from the Vulgate Bible, Psalm 139, which constitutes a prayer to God for strength against venomous tongues:

> Eripe me Domine ab homine malo a viro iniquo eripe me
> qui cogitaverunt iniquitates in corde tota die constituebant proelia
> acuerunt linguam suam sicut serpentis venenum aspidum sub labiis
> eorum custodi me Domine de manu peccatoris ab hominibus iniquis
> eripe me qui cogitaverunt subplantare gressus meos.[22]
> [Deliver me, Lord, from the evil man and deliver me from the iniquitous man who have devised iniquities in their hearts: for the whole day they planned conflict.
> They have sharpened their tongues in the manner of a serpent: they have the venom of asps under their lips.
> Keep me, Lord, from the hand of the sinner, and deliver me from unjust men who have thought to divert my path.]

The most pertinent line is the fourth, which Skelton interjected into his text. But by referencing this psalm, Skelton makes clear that the danger posed by slanderous men is twofold. First, there is a personal threat of a spiritual nature. These "unjust men" not only cause physical harm, but they can also cause spiritual harm by forcing good men to sin. The second element is broader: ecclesiastical figures in secular leadership roles—like Wolsey—not only have the power to cause physical harm to political opponents, but they are able to

20 "Read Philostratus on the life of Apollonius of Tyana." (trans. Scattergood).

21 *Against Venemous Tongues*, ll. 49–54 incl. marginalia.

22 *Biblia Sacra Vulgata*, Psalmi Iuxta 139, 2–5, 942, 944.

lead entire societies astray into sin. Skelton's meaning is made clear by the following stanza:

> Quid peregrinis egemus exemplis? Ad domestica recurramus, etc. li. ille.
> Such tunges unhappy hath made great division
> In realms, in cities, by suche fals abusion.
> Of fals fickil tunges suche cloked collusion
> Hath brought nobil princes to extreme confusion.[23]

Skelton alleges that men in England have caused social division by "fals abusion" and "cloked collusion"; furthermore, these men have led "nobil princes" astray. These lines foreshadow the vice characters in Skelton's *Magnyfycence,* which is exclusively concerned with what happens to a prince (and, by extension, a realm) when that prince's innate nobility is overthrown by "abusion" and "cloaked collusion."

It is this apparent concern about evil advisers that forms the basis of Skelton's explicitly anti-Wolsey poetry. It is possible that Skelton may not have been thinking of Wolsey when he wrote *Against Venemous Tongues*, as it is just vague enough to encourage debate about its target. Yet he clearly was concerned with what he perceived to be a domestic threat from Henry VIII's advisers, and Wolsey—as cardinal of York and Lord Chancellor—was by far the most significant of these. After all, *Against Venemous Tongues* is certainly written against a high-ranking target: the jibes about the target's livery makes clear that this is a man of high estate, and that examples can be drawn from England ("Let us revert to our own land"). Though the poem is vague enough to be applicable to any number of targets, the concerns that Skelton raises here came over time to represent Wolsey and Wolsey alone.

Concerns about ambiguity in regards to an apparent target is not limited to *Against Venemous Tongues.* There has been considerable debate about Skelton's intentions in writing *Magnyfycence*, with scholarship dating from before the 1960s tending to believe that Skelton had targeted Wolsey specifically and more recent scholarship generally supposing that this was a postproduction association. These debates have focused largely on the relationship between Skelton, the Howards, and Wolsey.[24] We have yet to find convinc-

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23 *Against Venemous Tongues*, ll. 55–58, incl. marginalia. "Why do we need examples from abroad? Let us revert to our own land." (trans. Scattergood).

24 William O. Harris, *Skelton's Magnyfycence and the Cardinal Vice Tradition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965), 12–45.

ing evidence that Skelton was writing under the patronage of the Howards; given that Wolsey and Thomas Howard (second duke of Norfolk) were working closely with each other throughout this period, it is unlikely that Skelton was encouraged by his patrons (if the Howards were indeed his patrons) to write anti-Wolsey satire. The more likely explanation was that at the time of composition (1515–1516) Skelton had not yet openly declared his distaste for Wolsey, but clearly was concerned about the rise of advisers whom he considered unscrupulous in Henry's court. He could thus employ commonplaces about evil advisers without overtly antagonizing Wolsey or his own patrons (or, if he were still searching for patronage, he would not accidentally offend a potential supporter). Regardless of whether or not Skelton explicitly wanted to single out Wolsey for condemnation, the same satirical elements were developed by Skelton into clear anti-Wolsey themes later. As we have seen, these concerns were first raised in *Against Venemous Tongues*; Skelton carried many of the same thematic elements over to *Magnyfycence* from this earlier text and, in developing these images for the allegorical characters in that play, he began to codify the types of images that would later become strongly associated with Wolsey.

Magnyfycence is a warning to princes about the subtlety and wiliness of unscrupulous advisers. Skelton's didactic tendencies were not as unusual or presumptive as they might initially appear: Skelton was tutor to the young Henry Tudor when the latter was still duke of York and felt it was of the utmost importance to impress a firm sense of moral rectitude upon the young prince. To this end he wrote an instructive manual for Henry, called *Speculum principis* ("Mirror of a Prince"). Once assumed to be a lost work, a manuscript was purchased by the British Museum in 1865, which may well have been a presentation copy given to Henry upon his accession to the throne in 1509.[25] Like other late medieval princely guidebooks, this text was designed to provide Henry with examples and guidelines on how a prince ought to conduct himself. It is in this didactic vein that *Magnyfycence* was also composed: as the former "creauncer" (a tutor or guardian) made clear in his c. 1523 *The Garlande or Chaplett of Laurel*, Skelton was justifiably proud of his role as Henry's childhood tutor and continued to see his relationship with the monarch in that light:

25 The dating of *Speculum principis* is uncertain, but it was most likely written while Henry was duke of York and Salter makes a strong case for the date of composition to be 1501. For more information, see F. M. Salter, "Skelton's Speculum Principis," *Speculum* 9, no. 1 (January 1934): 27–35.

> The Duke of Yorkis creauncer whan Skelton was,
> Now Henry the viij, Kyng of Englonde,
> A tratyse [Skelton] devysid and browght it to pas,
> Callid *Speculum Principis*, to bere in his honde,
> Therin to rede, and to understande
> All the demenour of princely astate,
> To be our kyng, of God preordinate.[26]

Magnyfycence may well capitalize (or attempt to do so) on that former relationship with the king, particularly as for decades Skelton struggled to regain a role at court and enjoyed only limited success.[27] Certainly Skelton's presentation of a copy of *Speculum principis* to Henry VIII in 1509 indicates a desire on Skelton's part to remind the new king of his old tutor's usefulness as a source of sober counsel.

Due to the uncertainties regarding the composition date of *Magnyfycence* it is impossible either to confirm or to dismiss Wolsey as the target of *Magnyfycence*, as we can hardly assign a motive to Skelton without being able to place *Magnyfycence* in its proper historical context. Though there has been debate about the date of composition, a date falling between 1515 and 1516 and after the death of Louis XII of France seems most likely.[28] The publishing of the first print edition of *Magnyfycence* in the early 1530s may well indicate that there was enough satirical imagery in *Magnyfycence* applicable to Wolsey that the publishing of the play was seen as a viable business decision in the aftermath of Wolsey's death in November 1530. The specific date of publication is unclear, however: while it is certain that it was published in London by Peter Traveris for John Rastell, it is not clear when it was printed. The two most commonly supported years are 1530 and 1533. Late 1530 seems most plausible based on the fact that Wolsey became increasingly unlikely to punish satirists as the year progressed; he was dismissed from court and arrested for treason and doubtlessly was concerned with his problems with the king. In addition, a satire applicable to Wolsey's situation would have had a strong resonance during the cardinal's months-long fall from power and subsequent arrest, or in the immediate aftermath of his death in November. However, the second date given—1533—hardly eliminates Wolsey's fall as the catalyst for publication;

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26 John Skelton, *The Garlande or Chapelet of Laurell*, in *John Skelton: The Complete English Poems*, edited by John Scattergood (London: Penguin Books, 1983), ll. 1226–1232.

27 Walker, 51.

28 Peter Happé, *Four Morality Plays* (London: Penguin, 1979), 36.

the dramatic fall of such a central figure in English secular and ecclesiastic government would not have been forgotten in three short years. The elapsed years shift the intended recipient of the warning from a still-living Wolsey to his protégé, Thomas Cromwell.

One of the difficulties present in associating *Magnyfycence* with Wolsey is the lack of clear references to contemporary political events. However, Skelton was often vague with references, relying on ambiguity to both shield him from censure and invite knowledgeable readers to participate in a spirit of intimate knowledge the poet may not actually have had. In addition, regardless of which dating argument we accept, by 1513 Skelton had not been even tangentially associated with the Court for several years and would certainly not have been in a position to comment on secret or sensitive policy decisions. Indeed, as a Court outsider it is difficult to ascertain Skelton's level of access to gossip, let alone more serious matters of state. In this light, it is understandable that we are not given many clear signposts in this text. As a result, *Magnyfycence* ought to be read as a generalized and often abstracted didactic commentary on court life written by a poet who was writing about people and events of which he had little (if any) firsthand knowledge. Without detailed information about Henry's court in either 1515 or 1519, Skelton would have been forced to make potentially erroneous assumptions and resulting claims about any Court-related subject about which he felt moved to write. The spectacular rise of Wolsey in 1515 would certainly have been cause for comment, as would have been the removal of several of Henry's Gentlemen of the Privy Chamber in 1519. These events were well known enough that Skelton would certainly have been aware of them and, given his repeated efforts to remind his former royal pupil of his usefulness, it would have been surprising if he had not commented on either of these changes to the English political landscape. If we read *Magnyfycence* in this light, we get a cautionary morality play warning Henry of the dangers associated with allowing court-figures (like Wolsey) too much license. *Magnyfycence* is therefore not so much a satire based on what Wolsey has already done, but a cautionary tale against what the cardinal—or someone like him—might do if allowed free rein, and how that individual courtier's behavior might encourage further misrule by authority figures. This reading has the benefit of encompassing the theory that *Magnyfycence* was written against the 'minions' in Henry's court who were removed for their overly familiar and occasionally lawless behavior.[29] As we shall see, Skelton was concerned deeply with the behavior of the "minions." However, his major concern

29 Scattergood, *John Skelton: The Career of an Early Tudor Poet*, 233–256.

was the abuse of power and the siphoning away of the king's royal dignity: this was something the minions did on a limited scale, but Wolsey was beginning to do to an astonishing extent.

As a result of this abstraction, Wolsey ought not to be understood as a perfect analogue or composite of the Vices in *Magnyfycence*, but rather that the Vices reflect elements of the archetypal evil counselor (as Wolsey came to be perceived by some). In a political sense, Skelton was concerned with Wolsey's rapid acquisition of power, and hoped that by demonstrating the consequences of a prince's giving too much power to a counselor, the young Henry VIII might recall the wisdom of his former tutor. Thus, *Magnyfycence* is not necessarily about what Wolsey has already done, but what he might yet do if left unchecked.

One of these ways in which Skelton does this is through satiric imagery. Of the various images that we see in *Magnyfycence*, many are associated with animals or nature. One image that seemed to have a particular contemporary resonance with sixteenth-century audiences was that of a predator who was able to trap his enemies, like a spider. The connection between spiders' webs and politicians' negotiations is alluded to by Counterfeit Countenance early in *Magnyfycence*: "Fansy hath cachyd in a flye net / This noble man Magnyfycence."[30] Though a fly net is essentially a butterfly net, the basic function is similar enough to draw a parallel. As his anti-Wolsey satire became more pronounced, Skelton clearly felt that the spider's web was an appropriate image to connect explicitly with Wolsey, as the spider's web also appears in *Why Come Ye Nat To Courte?*, in a paronomasia on Wolsey's name:

> We shall have a *tot quot*
> From the Pope of Rome
> To weve all in one lome
> A webbe of lylse wulse
> *Opus male dulce!*[31]

"Lylse wulse" was a linen-wool mixture of markedly inferior quality worn primarily by commoners of low status, and so the narrator of the poem has linked Wolsey both to a spider and to common birth.[32] This image had clear currency throughout the early modern period, with Wolsey (and other figures): Shakespeare himself utilizes the spider's web in association with Wolsey. In

30 *Magnyfycence*, ll. 403–404.

31 *Why Come Ye Nat To Courte*? ll. 28–132.

32 *OED*, "lindsey-woolsey."

the opening scene of *Henry VIII*, the Duke of Norfolk describes how Wolsey has thrust himself into power "spider-like / Out of his self-drawing web" (1.1.62–63). Both Skelton and Shakespeare doubtlessly were playing off the same social aversion to spiders; indeed, the *Oxford English Dictionary* lists numerous sixteenth-century definitions of spider used as an insult when "Applied to persons as an opprobrious or vituperative term."[33]

Other animals are represented in Skelton's texts: the jackdaw and lark both appear as unflattering images either of the courtly Vices or in connection with a similarly unsavory image of the Vices in *Magnyfycence*. Shortly after Crafty Conveyance tells Fancy to "Shyt thy purse, dawe,"[34] Folly brags to Fancy and Crafty Conveyance that he finds it amusing to watch the "folly" of commoners brought up into court:

> I have another maner of sorte
> That I laught at for my dysporte;
> And those be they that come up of nought—
> As some be not ferre and yf it were well sought—
> Suche dawys, what soever they be,
> That be set in auctorite.[35]

Folly here links two thematic images by stating that those not of a noble background ("they that come up of nought") are like jackdaws, an unflattering image, particularly as the jackdaw was "noted for its loquacity and thievish propensities."[36] By linking an unpopular bird reputed to be garrulous and thieving with commoners in "auctorite," Folly highlights the folly in trusting lowborn men (like the cardinal) to perform appropriately a role properly suited to a nobleman: a concern shared by many of Skelton's would-be readers. The image of the peasant or commoner supplanting the lord and thus overturning the natural order is also strongly represented in *Magnyfycence*. In keeping with the falsity he represents, Counterfeit Countenance proclaims proudly that through him the entire social order will be upset (with the horrors that would result from such chaos: namely, execution at Tyburn):

> A knave wyll counterfeit now a knyght,
> A lurdayne lyke a lorde to syght,

33 *OED*, "spider."
34 *Magnyfycence*, ll. 1207.
35 *Magnyfycence*, ll. 1238–1243.
36 *OED*, "jackdaw."

A mynstrell lyke a man of myght,
A tappyster lyke a lady bryght:
Thus make I them wyth thryft to fyght.
Thus at the laste I brynge hym ryght
To Tyburne, where they hange on hyght.[37]

Counterfeit Countenance's boast that "lurdaynes" (a term implying lowly birth, worthlessness, or rascality) and "knaves" would be indistinguishable from the true nobility utilizes the trope of the world turned upside down, a common feature of Skelton's courtly satires (particularly those written toward the end of the 1510s).[38] Through Counterfeit Countenance, however, the lurdaynes and knaves will eventually be found out and executed at Tyburn, containing the social upheaval they threaten. Courtly Abusion also mentions how, through the vice he embodies, men of ignoble birth can rise to power by abusing courtly manners and devices:

A carlys sonne[39]
Brought up of nought
Wyth me wyll wonne
Whylyst he hath ought.[40]

Courtly Abusion's assertion that the son of a carl (a commoner or husbandman, with intimations of a churlish or contemptible nature) might rise from a low estate to a position of wealth and power through the abuse of courtly manners echoes Counterfeit Countenance's earlier soliloquy.[41] By allowing commoners like Wolsey to rise in the social hierarchy, the Henrician court was permitting a level of social mobility that Courtly Abusion claims as emblematic of his eponymous vice. Just as Counterfeit Countenance predicted—with glee—the hangings at Tyburn that would doubtlessly result from his tempo-

37 *Magnyfycence*, ll. 417–423.

38 "A general term of opprobrium, reproach, or abuse, implying either dullness and incapacity, or idleness and rascality; a sluggard, vagabond, 'loafer.'" *OED*, "lurdan." See also Griffiths, 188.

39 Skelton may well be punning on "carlys" and "cardinal," though Wolsey was not the son of a churchman. This may be an oblique concern that Wolsey's son Thomas Winter might be given preferential treatment (as was later the case), but this is speculative; Winter was only a child at this stage, and Skelton may not have been aware of his existence.

40 *Magnyfycence*, ll. 898–901.

41 *OED*, "carl."

rary upsetting of the natural social order, so too does Courtly Abusion happily tell the audience the results of his vice:

> Spende all that his hyre
> That men hym gyve.
> Wherfore I preve,
> A Tyborne checke
> Shall breke his necke.[42]

The ominous specter of the Tyburn gallows looms at the end of each of the speeches by these two courtly vices. Both vice-avatars make perfectly clear that by reversing the usual social system, the result can only be upheaval ending in death.

Several of Skelton's Vice characters in *Magnyfycence* allude to obesity as representative of a counselor's apparent ignoble birth and behavior. When Counterfeit Countenance hears that Fancy has disguised himself as a knight named Largesse, he puns on 'large' and "Largesse" (as well as Fancy's self-promotion to the status of knight) by happily observing that Fancy's actions are "A rebellyon agaynst nature— / So large a man, and so lytell of stature!"[43] Though Fancy (as Wolsey allegedly was) is a large man, he is of small social value. Courtly Abusion also identifies himself with physical size, connecting bulk with greed and deceit, as well as with baseness of birth:

> He wyll have wrought
> His gowne so wyde
> That he may hyde
> His dame and syre
> Within his slyve.[44]

Courtly Abusion links physical bulk with deceit; here, the courtly Vice brags that through him, a commoner can hide his low birth. Furthermore, he adds an insult by referring to the hypothetical commoner's parents as "dam" and "sire," terms normally applied to animals.[45] In 1516 this link between physical bulk, common birth, and livestock might have been coincidental in its applicability

42 *Magnyfycence*, ll. 907–911.
43 *Magnyfycence*, ll. 522–523.
44 *Magnyfycence*, ll. 902–906.
45 *OED*, "sire," "dam."

to Wolsey, but by 1530 these images would certainly have strongly evoked the cardinal.

Courtly Abusion's use of the "gown" and "slyve" images in connection with the fatness of the wearer provides a connection to clothing as a thematic basis for imagistic metaphors in Skelton's satires. The historical Wolsey himself recognized the power of his clothing as a symbol: when he first was made cardinal, he arranged for his cardinal's hat to be given a remarkable reception. The martyrologist John Foxe describes the events organized to celebrate the arrival of the hat as being uncomfortably regal in scope:

> Not much vnlike to this [a recent royal event], was the receiuing of the Cardinalles hatte, whiche when a ruffien had brought vnto hym to Westminster, vnder his cloke, he clothed the messenger in rych araye and sent him backe againe to douer, appointing the byshop of Caunterbury to mete hym, and then another companie of Lordes & Gentlemen, I wote not howe often, before it came to Westminster, wher eit was set vpon a cupbourde, and tapers rounde about it, so that the greatest Duke in the land must make cursye thereunto, and to his emptie seate he beyng awaye.[46]

The symbolism of the hat was clear from the moment Wolsey received it. The power of such symbols is not to be underestimated; certainly Wolsey demonstrated this by compelling the highest-ranking men in England to recognize the newfound power that his hat represented—and, by extension, the absolute necessity in keeping that power. In *Magnyfycence*, Fancy provides a comic soliloquy on how he causes men to become "Frantyke," making their "wyttys be weke."[47] He acts out one of the symptoms of "franticness": "Where is my cappe? I have lost my hat!"[48] The hat as a symbol of Wolsey was a powerful one, which certainly would have been recognized by a contemporary audience. Indeed, as is made clear by other sixteenth-century authors (foremost among them being Foxe himself), many saw Wolsey's treatment of his hat as a metonym for his corrupt pride as a whole.

46 Foxe, 1563 edn., 493.

47 *Magnyfycence*, ll. 1023–1024.

48 *Magnyfycence*, l. 1030.

After *Magnyfycence*: Speaking Parrots, Everymen, and the *Alter Rex*

After the composition of *Magnyfycence,* Skelton spent the next few years writing less politically sensitive work: he focused mainly on a series of poetic flytings with various court poets, the comic poem *The Tunnyng of Elynour Rummyng*, and on refining the Skeltonic. The Skeltonic—which is characterized by irregular short lines of two or three stresses with long terminal rhyming chains—became Skelton's main poetic gift to posterity. Though convincing connections have been drawn between the Skeltonic and religious protest poetry from c. 1534 to 1589, this type of stylistic analysis has not been applied when comparing Skelton's earlier works to his later openly anti-Wolsey satires.[49] The importance of *Speke, Parott* has long been recognized: it is the first of Skelton's poems generally recognized as satirizing Wolsey. Despite its importance in Skelton's canon, its anti-Wolsey elements have not been compared to those found in texts like *Against Venemous Tongues* and *Magnyfycence.* That is not to say these earlier poems are identical to *Speke, Parott*: rather, the innovations found in this poem represent a crucial evolutionary link between the didactic, but ambiguously targeted *Against Venemous Tongues* and *Magnyfycence*, and the strident satire of *Collyn Clout* and *Why Come Ye Nat To Courte?*. Though it certainly is an opaque poem, *Speke, Parott* more clearly focuses on Wolsey as Skelton's target, unequivocally singling out the cardinal for the first time in the poet's career.

Speke, Parott was likely composed in two stages, the first before August 1521 and the second before December of the same year.[50] This poem marks a critical moment in the evolution of Skelton's political poetry. In his earlier poems (*Against Venemous Tongues* and *Magnyfycence*), Skelton's polemic was either too abstracted or vague to be definitively and exclusively anti-Wolsey; in effect, Skelton could not be condemned for attacking the newly minted Lord Chancellor. *Speke, Parott* does not radically depart from this approach—certainly not to the extent visible in *Collyn Clout* or *Why Come Ye Nat To Courte?*—but instead finds a middle ground. Skelton uses his protagonist, the mirror-to-life Parrot, to attack Wolsey by means of deeply obscure and erudite references, mainly Biblical in origin. These allusions allowed Skelton to increase the strength of his invective without exposing himself overtly to retribution from Wolsey. In addition, *Speke, Parott* has been interpreted as a poetic demonstration of Skelton's learning and skill in his quest for patronage.[51]

49 Griffiths, 158–170.

50 Kinsman, 10–11.

51 Walker, 53.

Though he stepped up his program of invective against the cardinal, Skelton continued to use the same (or very similar) imagistic tropes in *Speke, Parott* as he had in *Against Venemous Tongues* and *Magnyfycence.* One of the more memorable themes Skelton began to develop in *Magnyfycence* and specifically adapted to target Wolsey exclusively in *Speke, Parott* is the image of the lowly cur. Buried amid deeply obscure insults and jibes against Wolsey and humanist scholars (Skelton's more academic enemies, only loosely related to Wolsey), Parrot wittily refers to Wolsey's ambitions and pretentions by casting the cardinal as a dog:

> Bo-ho doth bark well, Hough-ho he rulyth the ring,
> From Scarpary to Tartary renoun therein doth spryng,
> With, "He sayd," and "We said." Ich wot now what ich wot,
> *Quod magnus est dominus Judas Scarioth.* (130–133)[52]

"Bo-ho"—a nonsense name—is said to "bark well," as a dog might, and thus he displays his dominance over the English political arena ("he rulyth the ring"). Indeed, Parrot tells his audience that Wolsey's posturing is communicated across Europe and Asia. In missives sent to locations as diverse as Tartary and Italy (Mt. Scarpario, or "Scarpary" is in Tuscany) Wolsey implies that his and Henry's wishes are coequal: instead of only issuing letters in Henry VIII's name ("He sayd"), Wolsey makes it appear as though he were co-equal with his monarch ("we sayd"). This is a particularly remarkable satirical feature in that it highlights a concern with Wolsey's alleged attempts to usurp Henry VIII's power long before it became commonplace (or safe) to voice such concerns. Wolsey would eventually be arrested in part for allegedly writing phrases that implied a parity between himself and Henry VIII—as Shakespeare would later dramatize as "*ego et meus rex*" (3.2.315)—as the articles of Wolsey's arrest in December 1529 show:

> [Article 4] For having in divers letters and instructions to foreign parts used the expression, "the King and I," and "I would ye should do thus," "the King and I give unto you our right hearty thanks," using himself more like a fellow to your Highness than a subject.[53]

This allegation against Wolsey had become widely known even before the cardinal's death; in September 1518 Sebastian Giustiniani observed that "the

52 *Speke, Parott*, l. 234.

53 *L&P*, 4.3, it. 2712.

Cardinal, for authority, might in point of face be styled *ipse rex*."[54] Giustiniani wrote to Leonardo Loredan, doge of Venice, that Wolsey's power over Henry VIII was far-reaching and publicly acknowledged—at least, acknowledged at court—as this summary indicates:

> After he [Giustiniani] took leave, contrived a conference with Thomas More, newly made counsellor. Endeavored to draw him into conversation: but he pretended to know nothing, "declaring that the Cardinal of York most solely, to use his own expression, transacted this matter [the Anglo-French peace treaty of 1518] with the French ambassadors; so that the King himself scarcely knows in what state matters are."[55]

Skelton's Parrot, aware of the dangers of a monarch relinquishing so much power to a subordinate, also likens Wolsey to Judas in the final line of the stanza ("that Judas Iscariot is a great lord"). By presenting Wolsey's usurpation of Henry's power as similar to a hypothetical role reversal between Christ and Judas Iscariot, this comparison emphasizes how the reader should understand the previous Wolsey metaphors to be equally negative.

The base birth of Wolsey is a recurring theme in Skelton's explicit anti-Wolsey satires. Though *Speke, Parott* is less obviously didactic than, say, *Magnyfycence*, Skelton uses his Parrot to concentrate his anti-commoner invective against Wolsey in a targeted manner that does not appear in his earlier works. In the following stanza from *Speke, Parott*, we can see Skelton's continuing use of metaphors related to low birth (and, in this case, animals as well):

> For Parot is no churlish chowgh, nor no flekyd pye,
> Parrot is no pendugum, that men call a carlyng,
> Parrot is no woodecocke, nor no butterfly,
> Parrot is no stameryng stare, that men call a starlyng;
> But Parot is my owne dere harte, and my dere derling.
> Melpomene, that fayre mayde, she burneshed his beke:
> I pray you, let Parrot have lyberte to speke. (204–210)[56]

This stanza uses anaphora to emphasize that Parrot is not a "churlish chowgh" (an archaic name for a jackdaw, which Wolsey had adopted on his coat of arms), nor a thieving magpie, but is a "popegay ryall" and by virtue of his status

54 Walker, 173; Giustiniani's quotation may be found in *L&P*, 2.2, it. 4438.

55 *L&P*, 2.2, it. 4438.

56 *Speke, Parott*, 236.

as a bird of paradise he can be relied upon: he is not a "pendugum" (a garrulous person) that is popularly called a "carlyng," and so he can be taken seriously. It is here we find the deeply buried satirical swipe at Wolsey. "Carlyng" has several possible meanings; in addition, an onomatopoetic link between "carlyng" and "cardinal" is suppositional but plausible.[57] More tellingly, "carlyng" is a diminutive form of "carl," which means a villein or farmer, and is consistent with Skelton's usage of that same word in *Magnyfycence.* Carl is also used as a synonym for "churl," having derived from the same Old Teutonic word, "karlo-z," and bearing the same negative implications as churl after the thirteenth century, which remained throughout the early modern period.[58]

Parrot also makes mention of Wolsey's size, often through obscure scholarly and Biblical allusions interspersed with insults based on Wolsey's allegedly obese condition. A typical example of this is his reference to Wolsey as a "fat hog":

> O Esebon, Esebon, to the is cum agayne
> Seon, the Regent *Amorreorum*,
> And Og, that fat hog of Basan, doth retayne
> The crafty *coistronus Cananeorum*,
> And *assilum*, whilom *refugium miserorum*,
> *Non phanum*, *sed prophanum*, standyth in lytyll sted:
> *Ulula*, Esebon, for Jepte is starke ded![59]

This stanza is rich with criticism of Wolsey derived primarily from the Old Testament (and Numbers 21 in particular). England is linked with Esebon (Heshebon), an Amorite kingdom that was ruled by Seon (Sion) and conquered by the Israelites, and Og was an Amorite giant who ruled Basan (Bashan) and was defeated by Moses and the Israelites after their victory over Seon.[60] Like many of Skelton's metaphors (particularly in *Speke, Parott*) these two metaphors are a little confusing and not entirely appropriate: Og is linked to Wolsey by virtue of his bulk and Wolsey is connected to Seon because of

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57 *OED*, "carling." It also is a variant spelling of "carline," a contemptuous term for a woman, which was frequently used in Scotland and the north of England during the late medieval and early modern period, though this is almost certainly not the sense Skelton meant it in.

58 Gavin Schwartz-Leeper, "Turning Princes into Pages: Images of Cardinal Wolsey in the Satires of John Skelton and Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*," in *New Perspectives on Tudor Culture: Literature, Society, and Politics*, ed. Mike Pincombe and Zsolt Almási (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2012), 78–99.

59 *Speke, Parott*, ll. 120–126.

60 F. W. Brownlow, "'Speke, Parrot': Skelton's Allegorical Denunciation of Cardinal Wolsey," *Studies in Philology* 65, no. 2 (April 1968): 124–139.

the Biblical ruler's tyranny. Esebon is connected with England purely because Seon (in this metaphor, Wolsey) ruled Esebon and was overcome by the godly Israelites (in this metaphor, presumably meant to represent right-thinking Englishmen). To Skelton it must have seemed an appropriate metaphor, if a bit muddied (and perhaps was intentionally muddy, as a tactic to avoid prosecution): Wolsey had won tremendous secular and religious power for himself and seemed to be the instrument of a resurgence of papal political control in England (a perception which would later result in Wolsey being cast in a writ of *praemunire*). Of course, Skelton was a fervent traditionalist, so it is difficult to argue for a fully articulated argument behind this stanza. Whatever the exact implications of Skelton's opaque message might have been, the satirical connection between the Lord Chancellor and the Biblical giant is clear enough.

As the decade progressed and Wolsey's power increased, so too did Skelton's invective. *Collyn Clout*, primarily composed before October 1522 (excepting a portion possibly written in early 1523), is built on the same satirical principles as *Speke, Parott.* Unlike his earlier satires, where the poet assumed a thick layer of ambiguity to protect himself, *Collyn Clout* maintains only a thin veneer of displaced opinion. Skelton does this by creating an "everyman" narrator: Colin Clout, who only introduces himself after a lengthy tirade against Wolsey. The initial fifty lines of the poem then are at first perceived to come from Skelton himself, making unclear how the reader is meant to interpret the authorial voice. In this excerpt, we can see how Skelton begins by asking rhetorical questions about the hypocrisy evident in Wolsey's actions:

> What can it avayle . . .
> To wryte or to indyte
> Other for delyte
> Or elles for despyte?
> Or bokes to compyle
> Of dyvers maner style,
> Vyce to revyle
> And synne to exyle?
> To teche or to preche
> As reason wyll reche?
> Sey this and sey that:
> "His heed is so fat
> He wottyth never what
> Ne whereof he speketh."[61]

61 *Collyn Clout*, ll. 1, 6–18.

The reader is thus presented with an argument about Wolsey's hypocrisy being borne out of his lack of fitness to be given authority. Only after this blast of invective are we told that this is not Skelton, but Colin Clout, who gives himself license to speak because of his straightforward nature:

> And yf ye stande in doute
> Who brought this ryme aboute,
> My name is Collyn Cloute.
> I purpose to shake oute
> All my connynge bagge,
> Lyke a clerkly hagge.
> For though my ryme be ragged,
> . . .
> It hath in it some pyth.[62]

The "pyth" that Clout refers to is a strident condemnation of Wolsey and his alleged self-interest and by extension those in power who do not try to stop the cardinal. Clout makes reference to the very few bishops who behave as bishops ought: they give sermons and attend to their congregations.[63] As Clout himself states, "take no dysdayne / At my style rude and playne, / For I rebuke no man / That vertuous is."[64] In condemning Wolsey's impious practices, Clout encourages those bishops he sees as exemplifying positive episcopal traits and who therefore might stand in opposition to Wolsey.

In this section, Clout has been identified explicitly as "Skelton's spokesman"; it becomes clear in hindsight that *Collyn Clout* represents the first of the obviously anti-Wolsey satires.[65] Previous texts displayed a clear authorial effort to provide muddy or oblique criticism, whereas by writing *Collyn Clout* Skelton publicly aligned himself in opposition to Wolsey—a position he clearly maintained throughout the late 1510s and early 1520s. Nevertheless, Colin Clout cannot be assumed to be equivalent with Skelton himself: Skelton—while doubtlessly aggrieved about Wolsey's alleged wrongs—was primarily concerned with patronage and therefore likely saw himself as voicing popular

62 *Collyn Clout*, ll. 47–53, 58.

63 Probably the bishops of London, Rochester, Lincoln, and St. Asaph. Of these, John Fisher of Rochester was the most prominent opponent of Wolsey and, later, the divorce.

64 *Collyn Clout*, ll. 1086–1089.

65 Paul E. McLane, "Prince Lucifer and the Fitful 'Lanternes of Lyght': Wolsey and the Bishops in Skelton's 'Colyn Cloute,'" *Huntington Library Quarterly* 43, no. 3 (1980): 163.

concerns though Clout.[66] It is therefore misleading to assume that Colin Clout is a mere mouthpiece for the poet and is giving firmly held personal beliefs of Skelton's. Instead, we should understand that Clout-as-everyman is bemoaning Wolsey's ascendancy over even the few good bishops, bishops who, despite their other positive qualities, do not (or dare not) stand up to Wolsey:

> But they are lothe to mell, And lothe to hange the bell
> Aboute the cattes necke,
> For drede to have a checke.
> They are fayne to play deuz decke.[67]

Clout here is making reference to the same commonplace as Langland's *Piers Plowman*, the late medieval narrative poem in which the commoner narrator (much like Colin Clout) raises concerns about unscrupulous nobility taking advantage of cowardly peers:

> But when the bell had been bought, and hung on the chain,
> There was never a rat in the rout—not for the realm of France
> —That dared to bind the bell about the Cat's neck,
> Nor hang it over his head, for the while of England.
> They confessed themselves fearful, and their plan feeble,
> And allowed that their labour was lost, and all their long scheming.[68]

By portraying Wolsey as a cat that ought to be controlled (in this metaphor, by means of a bell), Colin Clout both belittles Wolsey as, in essence, a relatively minor domestic predator and also provides moral contrast by comparing Wolsey with the good bishops. Of course, even the good bishops are too afraid of Wolsey to confront him for fear of punishment: "checke" here can mean a rebuke, but it can also mean a noose, as can be seen in *Magnyfycence*: "A Tyborne checke / Shall breke his necke" (ll. 907–911).

A recurring image that Skelton was helpless to resist was to form an imagistic pun on the surname of Wolsey's longtime mistress, Joan Larke. Wolsey's longtime relationship with Larke, who bore Wolsey two children before being

66 Walker, 189.

67 *Collyn Clout*, ll. 162–166.

68 William Langland, *Piers Plowman, with Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Pearl and Sir Orfeo*, ed. Christopher Tolkien, trans. Terence Tiller and J. R. R. Tolkien, (London: Everyman, 2001), 176–181.

married to another man, was not a well-kept secret. Colin Clout mocks the relationship by addressing Wolsey directly:

> I tell you as men say.
> Amende whan ye may,
> For, *usque ad montem Sare*,
> Men say, ye can nat appare;
> For some say ye hunte in parkes
> And hauke on hobby larkes
> And other wanton warkes
> Whan the nyght darkes.[69]

Skelton (via Colin Clout) states that he is merely reporting what is publicly discussed ("I tell you as men say"); indeed, he repeats this defense twice in the stanza. These deflections of accountability do two essential things: first, they allow Skelton to use Clout as an authorial shield, and second, they support the claim that Skelton is making. That claim appears in the second half of the excerpt by means of a hunting metaphor: that instead of attending to his ecclesiastical duties, Wolsey goes hunting "larkes" and "other wanton warkes." Most tellingly, these alleged hunts take place at night: a time better suited to womanizing than hunting.[70]

As in the earlier satires, *Collyn Clout* is also rife with jibes about Wolsey's size. Early in the poem, Skelton makes clear that the everyman Colin Clout (and by extension the godly people of England) makes a firm connection between the tendency of bishops to increase in size and worldliness as they rise within the Church:

> But thus the people carke,
> And surely thus they sey:
> "Bysshoppes, yf they may,
> Small householdes woll kepe,
> But slombre forth and slepe,
> And assay to crepe
> Within the noble walles
> Of the kynges halles,
> To fatte theyr bodyes full,
> Theyr soules lame and dull;

69 *Collyn Clout*, ll. 188–195.

70 Scattergood, note to l. 193 of *Collyn Clout*, 467.

And have full lytell care
Howe evyll theyr shepe fare."[71]

Clout laments the deceptive practices of bishops: though they might maintain small and humble households, they strive to live off the king's largesse and gain access to his presence: the font of secular power. As a result of this self-serving and distinctly impious behavior, the bishops neglect their ecclesiastical duties: while their souls grow "lame and dull," the bishops ignore the laypeople who depend on them for spiritual guidance and rectitude. The physical symptom of this is obesity, as bishops "fatte theyr bodyes full."

The year 1522 proved to be somewhat climactic for Skelton and his anti-Wolsey satire, as the poet finished *Collyn Clout* in the summer and moved on to his most open anti-Wolsey invective in *Why Come Ye Nat To Courte?*, which was completed in October 1522. Like *Collyn Clout, Why Come Ye Nat To Courte?* is primarily composed in the Skeltonic, with 1,248 lines of English Skeltonic, 27 lines of Latin Skeltonic, 10 leonine hexameters and 4 hexameters.[72] The long, occasionally breathless Skeltonic chains give this poem a speed and urgency that is reflected in the vehemence of the polemic used. The poem opens with a warning: "All noble men of this take hede, / and beleve it as your crede."[73] The poet, no longer using a distinct narrator-character to protect himself, revisits themes and images he used in his previous satires:

To hasty of sentence,
To ferce for none offence,
To scarce of your expence,
To large in neglygence,
To slacke in recompence,
To haute in excellents,
To lyght intellegence,
And to lyght in credence;
Where these kepe resydence,
Reson is banysshed thence,
And also dame Prudence,
With sober Sapyence.[74]

71 *Collyn Clout*, ll. 120–131.
72 Kinsman, 11.
73 *Why Come Ye Nat To Courte?*, ll. 1–2.
74 *Why Come Ye Nat To Courte?*, ll. 3–14.

As in *Magnyfycence*, Skelton here makes use of allegorical figures (such as Reason), but with a more explicit explanation of the consequences of bad governance by evil advisers (in this case, Wolsey). This trope indicates Skelton's engagement with a London readership—and an elite readership in particular, which fits with Skelton's long-running search for patronage—which would have been the majority of readers who might read Skelton's texts by virtue of their wealth and political engagement.[75] As with *Magnyfycence,* there is a clearly stated didactic element to this text:

> Than, without collusyon,
> Marke well this conclusyon:
> Through suche abusyon,
> And by suche illusyon,
> Unto great confusyon
> A noble man may fall,
> And his honour appall.
> And yf ye thynke this shall
> Not rubbe you on the gall,
> Than the devyll take all![76]

In this excerpt, we can see the didactic heritage of *Magnyfyence*; Skelton is warning the nobility that if left unchecked, Wolsey will ruin them. However, there is a strong element of ambiguity here.[77] The "noble man" of line 22 may refer to Edward Stafford, the duke of Buckingham executed on May 17, 1521, and thus might be either a condemnation of Stafford or a defense of him. If we read this as a condemnation, then this passage can be a prediction: if Wolsey does not mend his ways, he too will soon fall. If we read this as a defense, then the warning is being given to the truly noble men of the realm, who may be dragged down by the "confusyon" wrought by a man like Wolsey. In either case, the message is simple: these traits cause turmoil when present in the leading figures of a government.

The dangers of a kingdom ruled by vice-ridden advisers are expounded upon at great length: they vary from domestic misrule to disastrous foreign wars. Skelton rails against Wolsey's foreign policy: "For whyles he doth rule, / All is warse and warse."[78] In a patriotic appeal to his countrymen, Skelton

75 Walker, 91.

76 *Why Come Ye Nat To Courte?*, ll. 17–26.

77 Scattergood, 482.

78 *Why Come Ye Nat To Courte?*, ll. 134–135.

devotes some eighteen lines to anti-Scottish and French insults, followed by a return to his didactic warnings:

> But yet they [the French and Scottish] over-shote us
> Wyth crownes and wyth scutus;
> Wyth scuties and crownes of golde
> I dred we are bought and solde.
> It is a wonders warke.
> They shote all at one marke:
> At the Cardynals hat.
> They shot at that![79]

Skelton connects Wolsey's cardinal's *galero* with fears that foreign money had placed Wolsey (and thus, England) under obligations not in England's best interests. Following a list of English triumphs (and a few flattering phrases in praise of Thomas Howard, earl of Surrey at the time of composition, later the third duke of Norfolk), the juxtaposition of victory and defeat functions as a symbolic rebranding of the cardinal's hat. Instead of representing holy power and virtue, it is a symbol of *praemunire*: the exercise of a foreign jurisdiction in Henry VIII's England. For Skelton, the dangers associated with allowing Wolsey to place England under obligation to foreign powers (chiefly, France) are compounded by Wolsey's attitude toward his foreign policy. Not only has Wolsey purchased his hat at a high price, but he then aggressively promoted the hat as a symbol of his own power. The hat—and Wolsey's clothing in general—was a potent symbol frequently mentioned by Skelton. The poet connected these images of juxtaposed wealth and holy symbols with Wolsey's sinful pride:

> When "some" of the bishops are denounced as luxurious, "they" are described riding on mules, bedecked in gorgeous garments (309–322)—a description that tallies perfectly with Cavendish's famous picture of Wolsey proceeding to court.[80]

The contrast between the humble mule and the "gorgeous garments" worn by both mule and cardinal were vivid, easily understandable, difficult to defend against, and, as we shall see throughout this study, ultimately became a lasting image of Wolsey.

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79 *Why Come Ye Nat To Courte?*, ll. 169–176.

80 William Nelson, "Skelton's Quarrel with Wolsey," *PMLA* 51, no. 2 (June 1936): 392. For Cavendish's description of Wolsey's processions, see chapter 3.

As in the earlier satires, canine imagery features prominently among other animal images in this poem. In *Decastichon Virulentum*, a short Latin poem appended to *Why Come Ye Nat To Courte?*, Wolsey is referred to as "maris lupus," the "wolf of the sea."[81] The pun on Wolsey's name that this image centers on is perhaps not entirely appropriate, since Wolsey was not particularly connected with the sea, nor would assuming Skelton is making some sort of piratical allusion be a solid supposition; instead it seems most plausible that Skelton simply appreciated the paronomasic qualities of Wolsey and 'wolf-sea'. This hypothesis is borne out by the onomatopoetic pun on Wolsey's name in line 131 of *Why Come Ye Nat To Courte?* wherein the narrator refers to Wolsey's "webbe of lylse wulse," meaning a web of poor-quality wool. Regardless of whatever artistic merit readers may assign to the pun, Skelton is clearly making a pejorative link between Wolsey and the wolf, a symbol of clerical rapaciousness common in anticlerical satire that recurs throughout the century with increasing application to Roman clerics by Reformist polemicists. The currency of the Wolsey/wolf connection further encouraged this broader association, which manifested in a variety of formats.

It would be difficult to cite every example of anti-Wolsey imagery in this poem; Skelton devotes the majority of the text to blasting Wolsey in a variety of ways. But one final image must be remarked upon, for it in many ways sums up Skelton's legacy as far as Wolsey is concerned. In the following passage, Skelton impugns Wolsey by evoking the cardinal's heritage as the son of a butcher:

> He [Wolsey] regardeth lordes
> No more than potshordes.
> He is in suche elacyon
> Of his exaltacyon,
> And the supportacyon
> Of our soverayne lorde,
> That, God to recorde,
> He ruleth all at wyll
> Without reason or skyll.
> How be it the primordyall
> Of his wretched originall,
> And his base progeny,
> And his gresy genealogy,

81 *Decastichon Virulentum*, l. 1.

He came of the sank royall
That was cast out of a bochers stall![82]

Though many authors commented on Wolsey's low birth—certainly it was a remarkable feat for a common man to rise so high in government—few did so with the imagistic power that Skelton did. The "bochers stall" (butcher's stall) is typical: throughout Skelton's anti-Wolsey satires we find references to butchers, from which we are to understand a variation on the trope of the world turned upside down. This interpretation is underscored by the "potshords" (potsherds) reference: as a typological rude craftsman, Wolsey looks down on the nobility as remnants of an old and broken system, and unworthy of consideration.

1522: Reversals, Capitulations, and the Question of Wolsey's Patronage

For Skelton scholars, the end of 1522 is the beginning of a frustrating period in the poet's biography, largely due to Skelton's apparent volte face. This frustration has led to this period being one of the most discussed in Skelton's life, as all of the major Skelton studies in modern scholarship have devoted substantial space to attempts to explain the poet's behavior. In November 1522, Skelton was at his most stridently anti-Wolsey as he finished the final anti-Wolsey satire, *Why Come Ye Nat to Courte?.* As far as the poet laureate was concerned (and it appeared that he was quite concerned indeed), Wolsey was fit to be hanged:

Suche a prelate, I trowe,
Were worthy to rowe
Thorow the streytes of Marock
To the gybbet of Baldock.[83]

Though Skelton was clearly fond of the amplificatory figures and tropes, verses like these are so strident and consistent throughout the Wolsey satires and *Why Come Ye Nat to Courte?* in particular that it has often been supposed that Skelton himself truly believed in these sentiments. It has been rather difficult, then, for scholars who have taken Skelton's anti-Wolsey satires as indicative

82 *Why Come Ye Nat To Courte?,* ll. 480–494.
83 *Why Come Ye Nat To Courte?,* ll. 953–956.

of Skelton's true political feelings to understand how in January 1523 Skelton could have written the following dedicatory epilogue to his self-summative *Garlande of Laurell*, an epilogue that could not constitute a more sudden apparent reversal:

> To his most serene majesty the King, also with the Lord Cardinal, most honored legate *a latere*, etc. Go, book, and bow down before the famous king, Henry VIII, and worship him, repeating the rewards of his praise. And in the same way, you should greet with reverence the Lord Cardinal legate *a latere*, and beg him to remember the prebend he promised to commit to me, and give me cause to hope for the pledge of his favor. Between hope and dread.[84]

A Replycacion bears a similar dedication and has often summed up the nature of the problems created by the later pro-Wolsey poems for Skelton admirers. It is difficult for a reader familiar with the anti-Wolsey satires not to feel a degree of suspicion when considering Skelton's obsequious dedication:

> To the most honourable, most mighty, and by far the most reverend father in Christ and lord, Lord Thomas, in the title of St Cecilia priest of the holy Roman church, the most worthy cardinal, legate of the apostolic see, the most illustrious legate *a latere etc.* the laureate Skelton, royal orator, makes known his most humble obeisance with all the reverence due to such a magnificent and worthy prince among priests, and the most equitable dispenser of every justice, and, moreover, the most excellent patron of the present little work, *etc.* to whose most auspicious regard, under the memorable seal of glorious immortality, this little book is commended.[85]

Skelton's apparent change of heart has been explained as being borne out of his fear of an enemy greater than Wolsey: the "rising menace of heresy."[86] The abjuration of Thomas Bilney and Thomas Arthur in December 1528 was a victory for conservatives, but the danger posed by the increasing number and volume of reformers was becoming more apparent. What is particularly interesting about Skelton's invective is that in writing against Arthur and Bilney he employs many of the same images he used against Wolsey, demonstrating that

84 Scattergood, 512.
85 Scattergood, 517.
86 Edwards, 244.

Skelton was looking to reclaim and reassign the commonplace insults he had only recently leveled at the cardinal:

> I saye, thou madde March hare,
> I wondre howe ye dare
> Open your janglyng jawes,
> To preche in any clawes,
> Lyke pratynge poppyng dawes.[87]

As he did with Wolsey, Skelton dehumanizes Arthur and Bilney, comparing them to animals like the jackdaw. He favored this particular image, returning to it soon after:

> Wolde God, for your owne ease,
> That wyse Harpocrates
> Had your mouthes stopped,
> And your tonges cropped,
> Whan ye logyke chopped,
> And in the pulpete hopped,
> And folysshly there fopped,
> And porisshly forthe popped
> Your systematicate sawes
> Agaynst Goddes lawes,
> And shewed your selfe dawes![88]

That Skelton reused these images for an ostensibly unrelated target (the two reformers and not Wolsey) demonstrates three reasonable suppositions. First, that Skelton felt these commonplaces were applicable in these contexts. Second, that he wanted to reclaim these images and demonstrate that they were not specific to Wolsey, his new patron (which would thus depower their appearances in his previous satires). Third, Skelton could also comfort himself against charges of hypocrisy by claiming that Wolsey and the reformers all could well be enemies of the true Church, albeit in different ways, and therefore the same images ought to be applied to them.

Skelton scholars have historically fallen into two camps in regards to the about-face: one that takes Skelton at his word and one that does not. Those who do not believe Skelton to be speaking literally dismiss the anti-Wolsey

87 *Replycacyon*, ll. 35–39.

88 *Replycacyon*, ll. 114–124.

satires as intentionally hyperbolic and therefore not meant to be read in a superficial and accepting manner.[89] This argument is typical of scholars who feel that Skelton wrote his anti-Wolsey satires (and perhaps *Why Come Ye Nat to Courte?* in particular) with a sense of irony. This group would contend that the poet could not possibly have felt so strongly about Wolsey to have written these poems to be understood superficially and then so quickly turned to obsequious dedications a few short months later with the same honesty in purpose. The claim can also be made that Skelton was participating in the increasingly popular satiric trend that would later be epitomized by Pietro Aretino (1492–1556), the satirist whose for-hire attitude toward satire earned him notoriety, as well as the popular title Scourge of Princes. This theory has the virtue of fitting with the little that is known about Skelton's particular personality: though it is of course speculative to draw conclusions about a long-dead poet's attitudes, contemporary accounts and the consistent tone of outraged self-promotion indicates a man willing to write as the moment required.[90] That he initially believed Wolsey to be detrimental to the realm seems more than feasible, and he could easily have felt that by pressuring Wolsey into patronage, that he had secured both a literary and a financial victory.

The second critical perspective would instead state that Skelton did mean for his satires to be taken seriously and that these poems did represent the poet's mind at a particular point in time. For evidence, we could examine the lack of poetic balance between the ranting poet-character in *Why Come Ye Nat To Courte?* who defends himself and the art of poetic satire by stating that those who are shocked by his language ought to "Blame Juvinall, and blame nat me."[91] This argument has great force, as the only lines which are clearly attributable to the moderating narrator are systematically undercut by the railing poet. This tactic can be seen in exchanges like the following:

> Now mayster doctor, howe say ye,
> Whatsoever your name be?
> What though ye be namelesse,
> Ye shall nat escape blamelesse,
> Nor yet shall scape shamlesse.

89 Stanley Fish, *John Skelton's Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), 223. See also Burton Stuart Kendle, "The Ancestry and Character of the Skeltonic" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, 1961), 46–47.

90 Scattergood concurs in his recent *John Skelton: The Career of an Early Tudor Poet*, 353.

91 The Skelton is line 1222 of *Why Come Ye Nat To Courte?*, 309. See also Fish, 224.

> Mayster doctor, in your degre,
> Yourselfe madly ye overse!
> Blame Juvinall, and blame nat me . . .
> As Juvinall dothe recorde,
> A small defaute in a great lorde,
> A lytell cryme in a great astate,
> Is moche more inordinate,
> And more horyble to beholde
> Than any other a thousand folde.[92]

Though the narrator attempts to best the poet by mocking the poet's reliance on anonymity in the first seven lines, the poet is able to enlist Juvenal and yet more hyperbole and *amplificatio* to deflect both the negativity of his opponent and reaffirm the strength of his eminently reasonable argument against Wolsey (namely, that those in government must be held to a higher standard). Skelton used the more moderate narrator character to act as a form of *concessio* in order to give Skelton a more convincing platform from which to criticize Wolsey. When confronted with Skelton's abrupt change of stance, Stanley Fish argues that this represents a "graceful" change of perspective:

> I believe that Skelton recoils from *Why Come Ye Nat to Courte?* (he does not include the poem in his versified bibliography), and that the accommodation with Wolsey which has so troubled his admirers can be interpreted as a graceful and courageous retreat from a recognized loss of perspective rather than a betrayal of his principles. Indeed, it may be argued that the experience of writing and then reading this exercise in abuse is a salutary one; for it seems to point out to Skelton the necessity of a moral and aesthetic stock-taking. Within a few months he retires to the pastoral sanctuary of Sheriff Hutton, where, in the graceful verse of a simpler age, he looks back on his career.[93]

Fish's argument would be more convincing if a substantial period had passed between *Why Come Ye Nat to Courte?* and the genuine change of heart that Fish attributes to Skelton; it seems implausible that Skelton would have shifted from such strident satire to open-handed flattery as part of a "graceful and courageous retreat." Furthermore, more recent scholarship has convincingly

92 Scattergood, 1–16, 309–310.

93 Fish, 224–225.

argued that Skelton did not retire to Sheriff Hutton, there to write *The Garland of Laurell.* Instead, it is now generally believed that *The Garland of Laurell* was written mostly in the late 1490s and only finished in January 1523 and published on October 3 of the same year.[94] Instead of retiring to Sheriff Hutton and reconsidering his anti-Wolsey rhetoric, it is more probable that Skelton spent his final years in Westminster, writing and revising various works, including *A Replycacion* (1528).

Alternatively, some scholars also believe that Skelton may well have meant the anti-Wolsey satires literally and therefore did not necessarily mean for his dedications to Wolsey to be believed, because Skelton's capitulation was prompted by fear of punishment and the promise of a prebendary by Wolsey.[95] These two points ought to be addressed separately. The first—that Skelton became afraid for his safety—was supported with claims that at the time Skelton was living in sanctuary in Westminster, fearful of Wolsey's reaction.[96] However, Skelton's motivations for living in Westminster are unclear. There are no records that indicate any sort of action taken or threatened against Skelton, by Wolsey or anyone else. Whether or not Skelton had any basis for believing himself to be in danger has not been made sufficiently clear by available evidence; instead, we only have the word of John Bale in whose *Catalogus* we are told that Skelton lived in sanctuary. However, no definitive proof has yet been uncovered that demonstrates any connection between these two men, personal or literary, which makes Bale's statement impossible to confirm, and Bale's evangelical motivations unsettle the veracity of his accusations against Wolsey. That Skelton was promised a prebendary and was pushing the cardinal to recall his promise seems more concrete. Skelton himself mentions an "ammas gray" in the envoy to Wolsey attached to *The Doughty Duke of Albany*:

> Go, lytell quayre, apace,
> In moost humble wyse,
> Before his noble grace
> That caused you to devise
> This lytel enterprise;
> And hym moost lowly pray
> In his mynde to comprise,

94 Kinsman, 12.

95 Nelson, 396.

96 Nelson, 396.

Those wordes his grace dyd saye
Of an ammas gray.[97]

An "ammas gray" is "a hood of grey fur worn by canons and holders of prebends"; Skelton therefore seems to be reminding Wolsey of his apparent promise to give the poet a church office.[98] No other sources attest to this promise, but Skelton's mentioning it in connection with a work supported by Wolsey seems to provide at least a reasonable level of legitimacy on this matter. This fits with the print gloss to a vague reference to patronage in *The Garlande of Laurell*, which reads "Or els."[99] Skelton's gloss is not particularly subtle, but the "ammas grey" lines in *The Doughty Duke* are even less so: Skelton is reminding Wolsey of his promise as well as the poetic consequences of failing to do so.

Though it is tempting to imbue Skelton with heroic fortitude and cast iron morals, passages like these seem to affirm the opinion that the poet who wrote this envoy was looking for money. It is possible that Skelton did not really mean his obsequious flattery of Wolsey, and while this is certainly feasible, there is a more plausible option that has the virtue of simplicity. Skelton seems to have been looking for a patron or a position within the church or court, and would say whatever he felt was needed to achieve that goal. This is not a terribly romantic interpretation, but until further evidence is uncovered, it remains the most reasonable explanation for Skelton's apparent change of heart.

For our purposes, Skelton's legacy can thus be summarized in two distinct points. First, and most significant from the perspective of this book, Skelton crafted satiric images of Wolsey, which evolved over the course of the poet's career, and would continue to color characterizations of the cardinal for a century and more. Second, due to its use in the anticlerical *Collyn Clout*, the Skeltonic became inextricably linked with religious protest poetry, which allowed these images to cross sectarian boundaries and influence Reformist polemicists like John Foxe. These two features indicate Skelton's impact not only on early Tudor poetry and satiric characterizations of Thomas Cardinal Wolsey, but on early modern English literature more broadly.

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97 *The Doughty Duke of Albany*, ll. 523–531.

98 Nelson, 396.

99 See Jane Griffiths, "Text and Authority: John Stow's 1568 Edition of Skelton's Works," in *John Stow: Author, Editor and Reader*, ed. Ian Gadd and Alexandra Gillespie (London: British Library, 2004), 127–134. See also Jane Griffith's recent *Diverting Authorities: Experimental Glossing Practices in Manuscript and Print* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 2.

Godly Queene Hester: The Codification of Early Tudor Anti-Wolsey Satire

We have seen how John Skelton used farce and more serious mechanisms in a range of genres to create images and characterizations of Thomas Wolsey. *Godly Queene Hester*—an anonymous interlude likely written in 1529 but not printed until 1561—presents us with an opportunity to consider how Skelton's techniques were adopted and modified to transmit a strongly negative characterization of Cardinal Wolsey.[100] *Godly Queene Hester* owes much to Skelton's 1515–1522 satires, but remains distinct from its Skeltonic predecessors: it did not adopt the Skeltonic verse form in any strict sense, and though it assumes the same morality play narrative arc of *Magnyfycence*, it adapts it in several ways, most notably by the use of a Biblical narrative. Nevertheless, there are passages which clearly are influenced by Skelton's metrical patterns and characters—in particular, the Vices—which have led some scholars to investigate the possibility that Skelton himself may have written the play. However, given the lack of adherence to the Skeltonic and internal dating issues regarding composition, it seems more likely that the author of *Godly Queene Hester* was simply an admirer of Skelton's.[101] In assembling several Skeltonic anti-Wolsey images and adding new material, *Godly Queene Hester* formed part of the growing corpus of anti-Wolsey literature in the early part of the sixteenth century.[102]

Hester's relevance is not limited to mere participation, however. The adoption and adaptation of key recurring tropes by the *Hester* author signals a crystallization of particular, previously nonspecific negative images. Before *Godly Queene Hester*, a pun on a "bull" and a "papal bull" might be a satiric joke about Wolsey, but equally it might be a joke about the papacy itself, or any other churchman. Though it may not have been a trend caused exclusively by the appearance of a text like *Hester*, by the 1530s these jibes had a much more direct assumptive relevance to Cardinal Wolsey. Furthermore, the

100 Greg Walker, *Medieval Drama: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 409.

101 Greg Walker, *Plays of Persuasion: Drama and Politics at the Court of Henry VIII* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 102.

102 In the introduction to his authoritative edition of *Hester*, Greg Walker makes a strong case for the date of composition to be 1529, but acknowledges that previous scholarship has given dates ranging from 1522 to 1527. David Bevington puts the date as sometime between 1527 and 1529, but does not provide much evidence. For more information, see Walker's *Plays of Persuasion*, 102–132 and David Bevington's *Tudor Drama and Politics: A Critical Approach to Topical Meaning* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), 94.

generic connections between *Hester* and Skelton's *Magnyfycence* create a clear opportunity to consider how Skelton's earliest satiric images were adapted and reapplied to Wolsey in the midst of his tumultuous fall from power. One of the most obvious similarities between these texts is the secular morality play structure and, in particular, the inclusion of satiric Vice characters. By systematically analyzing these textual features and by considering the differences between *Hester* and its Skeltonic precedents, we can better understand how this text appropriated, adapted, and reinforced already-circulating images of Wolsey.

To provide a platform from which we can begin to discuss how Wolsey was satirized, it is necessary to look at the narrative of *Hester* as well as its chief source, before providing specific textual analysis and placing the work into a wider literary context. The play centers on the Persian king Assuerus, his chief minister Aman (who represents Wolsey), and the selection of the king's new wife, Hester. Assuerus promotes Aman from obscurity to be his minister, and requests that Aman's first task is to find the king a wife. Hester, the daughter of the Jew Mardocheus, catches Assuerus's eye and the two are quickly wed. After the wedding, the plot shifts to a more direct morality play structure, wherein the audience is given didactic speeches from the Vices (Pride, Adulation, and Ambition). The three Vices bemoan how Aman has overshadowed them, usurping their positions as the embodiments of their respective vices. Aman then enters and requests that he be allowed to resign his position due to the unwarranted enmity that his promotion has fostered. Assuerus declines, instead promoting Aman further and making the counselor lieutenant of Israel.

Having watched Aman skillfully manipulate Assuerus, the king's fool Hardydardy engages Aman in a highly satiric exchange, making reference to Aman's low birth, boundless power, and penchant for grand clothing. Aman dismisses Hardydardy's banter and informs the king that the nation's Jews have secreted away vast wealth and violate Assuerus's laws. The king agrees to suppress the Jews, appropriating their wealth for his own treasury, and Aman urges the execution of Mardocheus in particular. The Jews lament their fate, which is only averted by the moving speech made by Hester to Assuerus, begging him to spare her father and her people. The king relents, realizing he has been manipulated by Aman, and orders the execution of his minister on the same gallows that Aman had constructed for Mardocheus's execution.

The didactic nature of the play is made particularly clear when it is set against its source text, the Book of Esther. The plot is largely the same as *Godly Queene Hester*, which only deviates in a few details: Mordechai is Esther's cousin, rather than her father, and is persecuted for offending Haman. Though

the source text is followed relatively closely, the play features a particular difference that indicates a clear exegetical awareness. The Biblical story has a markedly different ending—used to explain the origins of Purim—where the persecuted Jews are given the opportunity to revenge themselves for one day on diverse enemies, not just the evil adviser Haman:

> Summaque epistulae fuit ut in omnibus terris ac populis qui regist Asueri imperio subiacebant notum fieret paratos esse Iudaeos ad capiendam vindictam de hostibus suis.
>
> [And this was the content of the letter, that it should be known in all lands and peoples under the rule of the empire of King Assuerus that the Jews were ready to revenge themselves on their enemies.][103]

The effect this alteration has on *Godly Queene Hester* is significant: in Esther, the focus is very much on the moral example of Esther and the deliverance of the Jews against their enemies (of whom Haman is merely the leader, which is what necessitates the tribe's destruction). In *Hester*, the morally instructive fall of Aman is the central organizing element, so there is no massacre of Aman's tribe or family; this is perhaps because the author wished to avoid conflating Wolsey and the Roman Church more broadly. The implications for an anti-Wolsey satire are clear; the source text was consciously adjusted to highlight the moral and satiric lesson at the expense of Wolsey.

Godly Queene Hester thus provides us with an excellent opportunity to gauge the rapid diffusion of Skelton's anti-Wolsey rhetoric, to highlight innovative features pertaining to representations of Wolsey, and to chart how these two elements influenced later texts. *Godly Queen Hester* is an ideal text for this study for several reasons. First, it is a clear and open work of satire. It engages closely with topical events and popular concerns: not well-worn issues from years prior to composition, but with the sweeping changes made in the year before Wolsey's death. The author was also largely unconcerned with protecting himself through vague or obscure satire, as was Skelton in his earlier satires: as an anonymous writer, the author could speak his mind much more freely, though he was naturally limited in receiving recognition or patronage for his poetic efforts. Second, it displays clear Skeltonic influences and similarities: it is a morality play, like *Magnyfycence* (c. 1516), and it picks up on anti-

103 *Biblia Sacra Vulgata*, Liber Hester 8:13, 721. See also Mike Pincombe, "Comic Treatment of Tragic Character in *Godly Queen Hester*," in *Interludes and Early Modern Society*, ed. Peter Happé and Wim Husken (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), 97.

Wolsey images found in several of Skelton's works (including *Speke, Parott*). In addition, there are clear (if scattered) imitations of Skelton's distinctive metrical pattern, though it is not clear if these are poor imitations or an intentional departure from the Skeltonic. The characterizations and images of Wolsey found in the text served to reinforce public conceptions of the cardinal, which in turn encouraged later writers to adopt similar images of Wolsey. Third, the anonymous author of *Godly Queene Hester* proved innovative: he combined the narrative arc and Vice characters from the morality play with the Biblical story of Esther. He adapted the Biblical story so as to make the issues, characters, and locations more directly applicable to the contemporary English political landscape. In doing so, he created a Biblically supported parable with very clear political messages to Wolsey and Henry VIII.

Finally, perhaps the best reason to study *Godly Queene Hester* is because it is almost certainly directed specifically at Wolsey. It has been debated whether the author meant to target Wolsey or Thomas Cromwell (in part due to the uncertain dating of the text as well as the focus on the suppression of monasteries, for which both Wolsey and Cromwell were responsible); however, the references within the text to pluralities, clothing, and (papal) bulls preclude the possibility that Cromwell was the intended target. Furthermore, if this text were about Cromwell, it is unclear why it would not reference events that occurred after Wolsey's death: Anne Boleyn's death, or the Anne of Cleves controversy, for example. These features are not present in the text; furthermore, the clear Skeltonic influence places this text within the emerging corpus of anti-Wolsey satire. The Vice characters are essential to the author's construction of Wolsey: individually they represent elements of Aman/Wolsey's character, and collectively they demonstrate flaws and dangers associated with archetypal evil counselors. This patchwork representation evokes the same construction in *Magnyfycence*; as we have seen, Skelton used similar Vice-avatars to represent courtly evils which, at least in part, represented elements of Wolsey's character.

Any Wolsey-centered analysis of *Godly Queene Hester* must perforce focus on the main vehicle for characterizations and images of Wolsey: the evil adviser Aman. Promoted from obscurity early in the play, Aman (and the audience) is warned that if the monarch's minister should abuse his position and fail in his duty to remain morally upright, the prince must exercise circumspection or risk being overwhelmed by his too-powerful underling:

> And, over this, if that his lieutenant
> Shall happen to square from trueth and justice,
> Albeit his faire wordes and good semblaunt,
> The prince must nedes be circumspect and wise,

That no ambicion not covetise,
Through great welth and riches inordinat,
Doe erect his corage, for to play checkmate.
For, though it be as well as it may neede,
It shall be thought nay, I assure you, in dede.[104]

This foreshadowing, which sets up the *de casibus* structure necessary for the didactic warning running throughout the play, is meant to be clear to an audience assumedly familiar with Wolsey's remarkable rise and then-ongoing fall from power. Aman, plucked from the anonymous rank and file, is made chancellor and entrusted with the king's most personal matters. Wolsey too was promoted quickly to the highest secular and religious offices in England; after a brief period of courtly unemployment following Henry VIII's accession to the throne, Wolsey accrued a startling number of benefices and appointments. Within six years of Henry VIII's coronation, Wolsey had gone from former royal chaplain to cardinal of York and Lord Chancellor of England. Aman's elevation to his high office is sudden, but is designed to reflect (if in an exaggerated fashion) Wolsey's real-world achievements.

The audience is prepared for such a promotion; the previous seventy-nine lines have shown Assuerus asking three advisers for assistance in selecting a new chancellor. The advice they give is morally didactic (as well as clearly foreshadowing the fall of Aman), instructing both monarch and audience that while a lieutenant must reflect all the virtues of a good king, the king may find the lieutenant overreaches himself, spurred on by greed and pride and damaging the entire realm as a result:

Besyde justice there muste bee diligence,
In hys owne personne that same to put in ure;
Or els some tyme suche coloured sentence
Under cloke of justice, ye maye be sure
Craftely shall procede from them that have the cure;
Which in processe, may brynge to downfall
The kygne, hys realme, and hys subjectes all.[105]

The key phrase in this excerpt is "under cloke of justice." It can be seen as a trope for the entire construction of Aman/Wolsey in the play, and even for the anti-Wolsey literature of the sixteenth century as a whole. It presents us

104 *Godly Queene Hester*, ll. 94–102.
105 *Godly Queene Hester*, ll. 57–63.

with our first (albeit slightly obscure) reference to Wolsey and is composed of two parts. The first part is concerned with justice. One of Wolsey's most controversial policies while Lord Chancellor was to reform legal processes with an eye toward the speeding-up of lengthy court cases. In particular, Wolsey spent a considerable amount of time personally presiding over the courts of Chancery and Star Chamber: partially because that role fell within his purview as Lord Chancellor, but partially out of what appears to have been a genuine interest in the law, despite his lack of formal training.[106] In addition, Wolsey made efforts to promote publicly the use of these courts (Star Chamber in particular) as a venue for the speedy and just redress of wrongs regardless of estate or birth.[107] Wolsey used these public venues as platforms from which he prosecuted some of the most powerful men in the kingdom (Henry Percy, fifth earl of Northumberland among them, as well as Wolsey's former pupil Thomas Grey, second marquess of Dorset), which earned him admirers among the commonality and enemies among the nobility.[108] Some seventy years later, Holinshed wrote that Wolsey initially cultivated a reputation for fairness to all social strata, but was later seen to have abused his position:

> And such was the administration of the Cardinall vnder a colour of iustice at the first: but bicause the same seemed at length to be but a verie shadow or colour in deed, it quicklie vanished awaie, he taking vpon him the whole rule himselfe, for that he saw the king made small account of anie other but onelie of him.[109]

The satirical criticism of Wolsey's legal policies is picked up explicitly by the Vices. For example, Adulation complains that because of Aman, he must "chaunge his occupation":[110]

> ADULATION:
> For al law, est and west, and adulation in his chest
> Aman hathe locked faste;

106 Peter Gwyn, *The King's Cardinal* (London: Pimlico, 1990), 114. For more, see John Guy, *The Cardinal's Court: The Impact of Thomas Wolsey in Star Chamber* (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1977).

107 Gwyn, 116.

108 Gwyn, 116.

109 Raphael Holinshed, *The Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, ed. Abraham Fleming, 2nd ed. (London: Henry Denham, 1587), 839.

110 *Godly Queene Hester*, l. 390.

And, by his crafti pattering, hath turned law into flattering;
So that, fyrst and laste,

The client must pay or the lawyer assaye
The lawe for to clatter.
And when ye wene he saide right, I assure you, by this light,
He doth not els but flatter.

PRYDE:

Why so?

ADULATION:

For, yf Aman wynkes, the lawyers shrynckes,
And not dare saye yea nor naye.
And, yf he speake the lawe, the other calles hym daw,
No more then dare he say.

So that was law yisterday, is no lawe thys daye.
But flatterynge lasteth always, ye may me beleve.[111]

The specifics of the allegation being made here are certainly debatable and broadly irrelevant: that the author of *Godly Queene Hester* included this humorous exchange is proof enough that there was a commonly held public conception that Wolsey twisted both the law and the courts to suit his own devices, and that he could be manipulated by flattery.

The second element of the "cloke of justice" image is the cloak itself. An image that participates in one of the most vivid and enduring Wolsey-tropes—that of Wolsey's clothing and outward wealth as inversely indicative of his moral failings—the cloak provides a small but crucial link to this particular theme across the literary sweep of the sixteenth century. Wolsey's critics rarely failed to connect the cardinal's penchant for spectacle and costume with pride. Skelton alleges throughout his anti-Wolsey satires that Wolsey used ostentatious displays of wealth to compensate for his lack of noble blood.[112] Foxe used Wolsey's sumptuous clothing as a metaphor for the pride and deception of the cardinal.[113] In *Henry VIII*, Shakespeare and Fletcher had Wolsey's enemies all make references to his clothing.[114] Cavendish, Wolsey's gentleman-usher, displays his heritage as the son of a mercer by listing the enormous quantities

111 *Godly Queene Hester*, ll. 402–416.

112 See chapter 1.

113 See chapter 3.

114 See chapter 5.

of expensive cloth in the cardinal's household.[115] The public image of Wolsey, bedecked in scarlet silks and velvets, always attended by his two cross-bearers (carrying the silver crosses symbolizing his cardinalate and archbishopric) and mounted on a mule covered in yet more red silks was a powerful one, and consciously used as such. It was utilized not only by the cardinal to impress, but also by his enemies as an example of his proud nature (Foxe in particular made much of Wolsey's displays of personal wealth). This image was used so heavily by Wolsey's critics that the very color of his clothing—generally scarlet, as befitting his rank of cardinal—became linked with treason. One of the brief but vivid clothing-related images in *Godly Queene Hester* comes late in the play, after Assuerus has ordered that Aman be hanged on the gallows originally built for Mardocheus:

> ASSUERUS:
> Hanginge doe serve, when they that deserve,
> Are false feytoures.
>
> HARDYDARDY:
> And it commes to lottes of heringes and sprottes,
> Which be no tratours,
>
> To hange in the smoke, til they chaunge their cloke
> From white to redde.[116]

As Hardydardy points out, however, the red cloaks of the herrings are not so colored because they are traitors (as Assuerus's logic would dictate): as such, Wolsey is not a traitor simply because he wore ostentatious cardinal's robes. Instead, Hardydardy's point is at once both more nuanced and simplistic: Aman deserved to be hanged because he had attempted to have an innocent man hanged, not just because of his treasonous behavior. Hardydardy underscores this Hammurabic justice in his final lines of the play: "Therefore, God sende all those that will steal mens clothes, / That once they may goe naked."[117] Wolsey's crime is one of hypocrisy and dishonesty, with demonstrable effects on the people of England; less tangible concerns about jurisdiction are less relevant to Hardydardy.

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115 See chapter 2.

116 *Godly Queene Hester*, ll. 1007–1012.

117 *Godly Queene Hester*, 1048–1049.

The image of the cloak was adapted by the author of *Godly Queene Hester* from critical writers like Skelton, who also used the cloak as a metaphor for obscuration and manipulation:

> He wyll have wrought
> His gowne so wyde
> That he may hyde
> His dame and syre
> Within his slyve;[118]

Though here Skelton was writing about wealth cloaking base heritage, the trope of outwardly grand displays masking internal corruption was commonly deployed against Wolsey throughout the sixteenth century. It is here in *Godly Queene Hester* that we can see how Skelton's initially general satirical swipe has begun to crystallize around Wolsey in 1529 as *Godly Queene Hester* was—probably—being written.

If the audience did not pick up on the clothing-based foreshadowing of lines 57–63, they would have been hard-pressed to ignore the author's vigorous reinforcing of the Wolsey clothing trope shortly following this excerpt. Pryde—the embodied Vice and staple of the medieval morality play—complains that he been overthrown and is now but "poorly arrayed":[119]

> Syrs, my name is Pryde, but I have layde asyde
> All my goodly araye:
> Ye wynne I lye? There is a cause why
> That I goe not gaye.
>
> I tell you at a worde, Aman that newe lorde,
> Hath bought up all good clothe,
> And hath as many gownes as would serve ten townes
> Be ye never so lothe:
> And any manne in the towne doe by him a good gowne,
> He is verye wrothe;
>
> And wyll hym strayte tell, the statute of apparell,
> Shall teache hym good.

118 *Magnyfycence*, ll. 902–906.

119 *Godly Queene Hester*, stage directions for l. 338.

> Wherefore by thys daye, I dare not goe gaye;
> Threde bare is my hoode.[120]

The jibe here is that Aman's greed for fine clothing is so great that he has caused a shortage of cloth. Moreover, any man who manages to get his hands on a "good gowne" will suffer the wrath of the chancellor by means of the Statutes of Apparel: laws governing what particular types of clothing or jewelry could be worn by particular social classes. In the 1587 edition of *Holinshed's Chronicles*, the editors included an anecdote taken from Hall's *Chronicle* regarding Wolsey's prosecution of a country gentleman under these statutes:

> He was no sooner [Lord Chancellor], but he directed foorth commissions into euerie shire, for the execution of the statutes of apparell and labourers, and in all his dooings shewed himselfe more loftie and presumptuous than became him. And he himselfe on a daie called a gentleman named Simon Fitz Richard, and tooke from him an old iacket of crimsin veluet and diuerse brooches, which extreame dooing caused him greatlie to be hated: and by his example manie cruell officers for malice euill intreated diuerse of the kings subiects, in so much that one Shinning, maior of Rochester, set a yoong man on the pillorie for wearing of a riuen or gathered shirt.[121]

It may be fruitful to determine the veracity of this report—or to ascertain whether or not prosecutions for apparel violations increased under Wolsey's administration—but for our purposes, the issue is moot. The public appeared to believe that Wolsey was excessively rigid in pursuing prosecutions, particularly when his own love of clothing was so well-known. The manner in which these stanzas are written further reinforce this farcical narrative, with the internal rhymes lending the anecdote a humorous air. In reality, however, the pillory was a brutal punishment, in which the defendant was exposed to the elements and to potential abuse (occasionally leading to maiming or death) from the public. Indeed, the pillory can be grouped together with "public whippings, maimings, and . . . capital executions" as serious corporal punishments with a strong element of public participation.[122] It is unclear if Wolsey actually had anything to do with the Rochester man's being placed

120 *Godly Queene Hester*, ll. 368–381.

121 Holinshed's *Chronicle*, 1587 ed., 837.

122 Richard Andrews, *Scripts and Scenarios: The Performance of Comedy in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 13.

in the pillory, or whether Wolsey was viewed as responsible for cultivating an environment wherein minor offenses were prosecuted with brutal exactitude. The existence of texts like *Godly Queene Hester* prove at least a significant baseline of public opinion against Wolsey based on something as everyday as clothing: the utility of the image of hypocrisy that these writers created in turn influenced the Reformist chroniclers of Mary and Elizabeth's reigns, who in turn cemented for posterity the image of a crimson silk-swathed Wolsey condemning a man for an old velvet shirt.

Wolsey's love of fine clothing is far from the only aspect of the cardinal's character that comes under fire. After Assuerus appoints Aman as chancellor and charges him with finding a suitable queen, Aman collects a bevy of women for the king's perusal. First of these is the eponymous Hester, who is immediately married by Assuerus. Aman is commanded to look after the new queen, and the two depart with Hester's new ladies-in-waiting. Curiously, no mention is made of Assuerus leaving the stage, implying that the following scene is for his benefit (and perhaps even with his silent participation).[123] In this scene, we also are first introduced to the Vices, who provide both comic relief and moral instruction couched in satire. First Pryde takes the stage, explaining to the audience (and Assuerus) that some men (namely, Aman) are dissembling and deceptive:

> To men that be hevy, and wolde faine be mery,
> Though they feele smarte:
> Oft chance such rekning that with their mouth thei sing,
> Though thei wepe in their hart.
> . . .
> Who so will accord with this double world
> Muste use suche artes:
> Outwardly kinde, in his heart a fende,
> A knave in two parts.
>
> Outward honestie, inward infidelitie,
> Both rydes on a mule:
> In peace he is bolde, but in war he is colde,
> That soonest wyll recoyle.
> . . .

123 In addition, at the end of this scene Aman reenters and speaks with Assuerus, reinforcing the argument that he has remained onstage (not even to enter his traverse, which he does at line 635).

He that is double loves alwaye trouble,
And at no tyme wyll cease:
And yet he wyll not fight, by daye or yet by nyghte,
In warre nor in peace.

But such men by battail may get corne and cattell,
Bullyon and plate:
And yf they once get it, let us no moore crave it,
By God, we comme to late,
Eyther to begge or borowe, except shame or sorowe,
Dyspleasure and hate.[124]

This excerpt does three things. First, it explains that two-faced people are morally bankrupt and can profit through their deception. Furthermore, anyone who engages with this type of person is complicit in their deception: perhaps a dangerous sentiment to express when Aman is meant to represent Wolsey and Assuerus is linked to Henry VIII. Ostensibly the author felt that by keeping Assuerus on stage, this passage was meant to be taken as advice preceding a mistake, which would blunt the edge of the satire. In either case, the second element of this passage is a warning that if someone is allowed to accrue wealth—any wealth—through this deception, he will become so greedy and possessive that he will not only seek to increase his own wealth, he will do so to the active detriment of others ("let us no moore crave it, / By God, we comme to late").[125]

Pryde's warning leads us to the third and (for our purposes) most significant element of this excerpt: the specific anti-Wolsey satire. The most significant stanza is lines 350–353:

Outward honestie, inward infidelitie,
Both rydes on a mule:
In peace he is bolde, but in war he is colde,
That soonest wyll recoyle.[126]

The mule was Wolsey's preferred mount, as it was for most churchmen. It is a particular potent satiric symbol because it perfectly illustrates Wolsey's alleged dissimulative nature: a Christ-like symbol of humility swathed in rich red silks,

124 *Godly Queene Hester*, ll. 338–341, 346–353, 358–368.
125 *Godly Queene Hester*, ll. 364–365.
126 *Godly Queene Hester*, ll. 350–353.

ridden by a man ostensibly dedicated to the Church, but instead devoted to worldly displays of wealth. This paradox was an ideal image for critics of Wolsey, and its appearance in *Godly Queene Hester* is noteworthy because it represents an early usage of an image that resurfaced repeatedly in anti-Wolsey literature throughout the sixteenth century. Foxe was evidently so taken with it that he appears to have invented a farcical incident involving mules and the spilling of garbage disguised as riches.[127] It must be noted that this line of argument does not require the author of *Godly Queene Hester* to have been a Reformist; indeed, the persecuted innocents of the play (Hester's father Mardocheus and the Jews more broadly) stand in for the monastic communities Wolsey had been investigating and suppressing in part to fund his new colleges at Oxford and Ipswich. We can therefore understand the author of *Godly Queene Hester* to have been a promonastic conservative, at least in a general sense. Walker has convincingly argued for an interpretation of *Godly Queene Hester* as "a carefully thought out apology for monasticism based upon the social utility of the monastic houses."[128]

The rest of the excerpt is chiefly concerned with criticizing Wolsey's perceived attempts to manipulate foreign affairs. Wolsey put a great deal of effort into a vigorous foreign policy, and the author references these often protracted and knotty machinations and accuses Wolsey of being deceptive and cowardly ("In peace he is bolde, but in war he is colde," l. 352). This excerpt demonstrates clearly a sentiment shared with Skelton's Wolsey satires and which was magnified by numerous authors later in the century. This feeling was shared by Skelton and others, particularly in the humanist network presided over by Sir Thomas More during the financial crisis of the 1520s.[129] Furthermore, the diplomatic scurrying at which the *Hester* author sneers demonstrates Wolsey's apparent ineptitude. To make Wolsey ridiculous is essentially the purpose of the Vice-characters, and by portraying Aman as a cowardly diplomat hypocritically pressing for Persian dominance while urging peace, the author highlights Wolsey's allegedly similar traits.

One of the perennial favorite topoi of anti-Wolsey satirists and critics was to figure the cardinal as an animal, or to make an animal-based allusion to Wolsey. As with the example above, the purpose of this figuring was to reduce Wolsey's status through ridiculous portrayals. We have already seen how the *Hester* author uses an animal image as an insult in line 413: "And, yf he speake the lawe, the other calles hym daw" (though in this case it is Aman

127 For more information, see chapter 4.

128 Walker, 110.

129 Bevington, 91.

who is calling someone else a "daw"). The word is here used to liken the subject to a jackdaw, "noted for its loquacity and thievish propensities," and was a common insult for someone perceived as foolish.[130] Ambytion argues that Aman's use of "daw" later in the play is unwittingly ironic:

> Yes, for God, ye same,
> I was wonte to be a great clarke,
>
> Byt, syn Aman bare rewle, neyther horse nor mule
> But ys as wyse as I.
> . . .
> For all rewlers and lawes were made by fooles and dawes,
> He sayth, verely.[131]

That Aman/Wolsey would claim that all laws were made by dawes' is amusing to Ambytion (and ostensibly the audience), since he himself was the primary lawmaker: "verely" Aman is correct, though clearly he did not intend for himself to be considered as one of the "dawes."

Figuratively, *paronomasia* in particular played a significant part in the construction of a largely negative public image of Wolsey: puns on his name, his cardinalate (or his connections to the pope), and his base parentage were all increasingly common throughout the sixteenth century. Wool (and sheep), wolves, bulls, calves (and the butchering thereof), birds (particularly jackdaws), and dogs all figure prominently in these texts. As we have seen, Skelton heavily utilized animal imagery throughout his poetry from 1515 to 1522, setting a precedent the author of *Godly Queene Hester* followed closely. In the following excerpt, Adulation describes how priests have stopped fighting immorality because they were too often rebuked, and now—having taken their example from Wolsey—do nothing but seek wealth:

> When they preached, and the truthe teached,
> Sume of them caughte a knocke,
> And they that should assisted, I wore not how were brysted,
> But they dyd nothynge but mocke.
>
> And that sawe they, and gate them awaye,
> As faste as myghte be.

130 *OED*, "jackdaw," "daw," sense 2.

131 *Godly Queene Hester*, ll. 454–457, 459–460.

They solde theyr woll, and purchased a bull,
Wyth a pluralyte.[132]

The "wool" here is both an allusion to Wolsey's name and a play on the Biblical metaphor of the congregation being a flock: that is to say, the shepherd (the priest) taking the wool (the wealth) of the congregation. Aman has been accused of "fleecing the flock."[133] This pun is reinforced later in the play, when Ambytion complains how Aman has taken so many offices that Ambytion himself has given over all ambition to Aman:

And I, Ambytion, had a comission,
By force of a bull,
To gett what I could, but not as I wolde,
Neyther of lambe nor woll,

The bull nor the calfe, coulde please the one halfe
Of my fervente desire.
But ever I thought, by God, there was I woulde have had
When I was never the nere.

Therefore, all my ambition, to gether in a comission,
Under my seale,
I geve it to Aman, to the intent that Sathan
Maye love hym well.[134]

The "bull" in both these excerpts is a papal bull: a legal edict that allows the pope to make proclamations or alter canon law. In this particular case, the author is lamenting how Wolsey was able to use his great wealth (accrued through his religious and temporal offices) to purchase papal bulls allowing him to hold multiple benefices concurrently: a practice common in the late medieval period, but one that Wolsey seems to have perfected. As we have seen, at the end of his career, Wolsey was simultaneously legate *a latere*, cardinal of York, abbot of St. Albans, and bishop of Winchester, having previously been bishop of Lincoln, Durham, Bath and Wells, and Tournai.[135] Whether his

132 *Godly Queene Hester*, ll. 424–431.

133 *Godly Queene Hester*, footnote to line 431.

134 *Godly Queene Hester*, ll. 544–557.

135 For more detailed information on Wolsey's diocesan holdings, see the *Guide to Bishops' Registers of England and Wales*, ed. David M. Smith (London: Royal Historical Society, 1981), 35, 124, 211, 248.

pluralities were immoral or unjustly earned, it is difficult to say: it is certain, however, that to many—both conservative and reform-minded alike—he seemed to be motivated primarily by greed and ambition.

The bull image is not restricted to allusions to papal bulls. Wolsey's base birth, as the son of an Ipswich tradesman or merchant also was the butt of many puns. The bull is also a reference to his father—Robert Wolsey of Ipswich—and his supposed trade as a butcher. While his gentleman-usher George Cavendish described Wolsey rather vaguely as an "honest poore mans Sonne" and there is still a degree of ambiguity about the senior Wolsey's occupation, the taunt about being the son of a butcher was generally accepted in the sixteenth century. William Roy and Jerome Barlowe called Wolsey "the vyle butchers sonne" in the introduction to their 1528 doggerel poem *Rede me and be nott wroth*.

In addition, the author of *Godly Queene Hester* also connected the bull with Perillus, who was described in Pindar's *Pythian Odes* as having been commissioned by Phalaris (a tyrant of unusual cruelty) to build a sculpture of a bronze bull inside which the tyrant could roast his enemies alive. Once the bull was completed, Phalaris caused Perillus to be roasted in his own device.[136] In *Godly Queene Hester,* Hardydardy tells Assuerus that Aman was—like Perillus—the author of his own destruction:

HARDYDARDY:
Phalaris coulde not get with in the bull to shett
(Lo, here beginnes the game!)
Wherefore, in dede, he toke for nede
Perillus, maker of the same.

In he did him turne, and made the fier to burne
And greatly to increace.
He cast him in such heate, and eke in such sweate,
He fried him in his greace.

ASSUERUS:
What meane you by this?

HARDYDARDY:
I wyll tell you, by gis, my hole intencion.
I meane, my master is the fyrste taster

136 Pindar, *Pindar vol. I: Olympian Odes; Pythian Odes*, ed. and trans. William H. Race (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press for Loeb Classical Library, 1997), 225.

> Of his owne invencion.
> The gallhouse he made, both hye and brode,
> For Mardocheus he them mente;
> And now he is faine him selfe, for certaine,
> To play the fyrste pagente.[137]

Hardydardy's coarse gallows humor is plain, but Assuerus asks for explicit clarification: the audience not only is provided with an explanation of the relevance of the Phalaris story, but is also given some scatological and sexual humor.[138] The purpose of Hardydardy's bawdy jokes (he begins this routine with a joke about how Aman has "made a rodde / For his owne ars") is not merely to provide comic relief. Hardydardy's role is both that of a traditional Vice (he portrays 'foolishness') as well as that of the truth-speaking fool. The audience is meant to understand that while Hardydardy is making sexual innuendos, he is also clarifying the moral lesson being imparted.

One of the final animal tropes to be applied to Aman/Wolsey is only mentioned once, but it is no less significant for its brevity. Upon his entrance to the play, Hardydardy recites a proverb to Aman and the audience: "A proverbe, as men say: a dogge hath a day."[139] A few lines later, he reiterates the proverb again, with a little exposition:

> But, as I say, a dogge hath a day,
> For now I truste to get.
> My tyme is come for to get some,
> If I be not lett.[140]

The "dogge" image is a very common one in anti-Wolsey literature of the sixteenth century: it appears in virtually every text in this study, often multiple times. Of course, calling someone a dog is hardly novel and certainly not unique to anti-Wolsey authors. However, as a term of opprobrium applied to a com-

137 *Godly Queene Hester*, ll. 1030–1045.

138 Mike Pincombe disagrees, writing that Hardydardy "never descends to the low thematic level of farts and whores," 113. However, Hardydardy here is on thin ice and a distraction would have been welcome: if Aman is to be understood as Perillus, then the logical inference is that Assuerus is represented by Phalaris the tyrant. Hardydardy, questioned by Assuerus about his meaning, must quickly reinforce the connection between Aman and Perillus and quietly let the original context of the anecdote drop.

139 *Godly Queene Hester*, l. 636.

140 *Godly Queene Hester*, ll. 645–649.

moner who had risen high and made many enemies in doing so, "dog" evidently filled a particular niche. In this particular case, Hardydardy utilizes "dog"' both to insult Aman and himself. Aman has just been promoted by Assuerus (thus, that particular 'dog' will have his day), but Hardydardy also casts himself in the same position. As Hardydardy (like all the Vices) represents a particular aspect of Wolsey, the author is simply compounding the insult.

The conclusion of the play reiterates the moral message of *Godly Queen Hester*: namely, that Aman's greed, ambition, and low birth assured his own destruction. Aman is hanged on the gallows he had constructed to hang Mardocheus on, having failed in his attempt to convince Assuerus to kill all the Jews in order that he might repossess their allegedly hoarded wealth. Hardydardy, in his role as the wise fool, had warned Aman that he would be executed if he did not restrain the negative traits the Vices had bequeathed to him:

HARDYDARDY:
Men say, in dede, ye shall lose your head,
And that woulde make you stumble.

AMAN:
Why so?

HARDYDARDY:
Thei say it is convenient should be fulfulled ye testament
Of Ambition, Adulation, and Pride.
They gave you all their pryde and flatterynge,
And after that, Saint Thomas Watring, there to rest a tide.[141]

St. Thomas-a-Watering (also called St. Thomas Waterings) was an execution site near Southwark, on the old Roman Watling Street. Hardydardy prophesies that because Aman has absorbed the functions of the other Vices, he will be executed: a reiteration of a general warning that Adulation makes in line 543 earlier in the play. The purpose of this repetition is to make the moral lesson absolutely clear: Wolsey, as Aman, overreached himself through pride and ambition, and therefore deserves—the author believes—to lose his head. Though Wolsey was not executed, that outcome was far from unlikely, given his arrest for treason and the ascendancy of his noble enemies.

141 *Godly Queene Hester*, ll. 797–803.

Hester in Context: Heritage and Effect

There are a number of sources the author of *Hester* could have had access to, with John Lydgate's *Fall of Princes* being a clear influence on the text.[142] However, the most important influence on *Godly Queene Hester*, was John Skelton's poetry. Numerous imagistic connections reference various texts by Skelton (the similarity between the "bull" references to Wolsey in *Speke, Parott* and *Hester*, for example, is particularly marked).[143] There are also substantial portions of *Godly Queene Hester* that feature a poetic structure that appears to be loosely based on the Skeltonic. Large portions of Hardydardy's lines feature short, irregularly stressed lines similar to Skelton's, though they tend not to demonstrate the distinctive long linked rhyming chains of the Skeltonic.

While the poetic forms found in *Hester* are varied, the play demonstrates a clear heritage derived from the medieval morality play. It features the rise and fall of a commoner, from which the audience could be expected to draw a moral lesson. The Biblical framework of the message is far from uncommon, though it is applied to a specifically secular concern (namely, the immorality and deserved destruction of a secular lieutenant to the monarch). Another key facet of analyzing *Godly Queene Hester*'s structure is that it helps to reinforce our understanding of Skelton's *Magnyfycence* and, more broadly, mid-Tudor anti-Wolsey satire. The connections between these two texts have occasionally been noted as examples of the varieties of Tudor interlude, but rarely explored.[144] Scholarship has primarily focused on Hester in the play text, the play's connections to the suppression of the monasteries, and more general statements about the utility of these types of plays as political critiques.[145] It is difficult to state with certainty that Wolsey specifically was the target of *Magnyfyence*; textual analysis and the existence of a first print edition can only provide circumstantial evidence that in that in the final years of Wolsey's career and after the cardinal's death, *Magnyfycence* was read retroactively as an attack on Wolsey. The Vices in this sense are understood to represent Wolsey (as archetypal evil counselor) collectively, with each Vice acting as a hyperbolic avatar of a particular aspect of the cardinal's apparent personality. The fact that Skelton

142 Pincombe, 110.

143 *Godly Queene Hester*, footnote 40, 420.

144 Janette Dillon, *The Cambridge Introduction to Early English Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 146.

145 Bevington, 90; Walker, 102–132; Thomas Betteridge, "John Heywood and Court Drama," in *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Literature, 1485–1603*, ed. Mike Pincombe and Cathy Shrank (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 174.

moved on to write increasingly targeted and vitriolic anti-Wolsey satire—which were also among his most popular works during his lifetime—served to reinforce this interpretation. *Godly Queene Hester* demonstrates this retrospective reading of *Magnyfycence.* As mentioned previously, scholars have generally agreed that the *Hester* author is closely linked to Skelton: indeed, some have argued that the author is in fact Skelton himself. In either case, it is not much of a stretch to assert that the *Hester* author adapted techniques, images, and characterizations found in *Magnyfycence* to write his own more open anti-Wolsey satire. While *Hester* features a more traditional Biblical framework, the similarities between the Vices of both plays as well as the exclusively secular reflections of both *Magnyfycence* and *Godly Queene Hester* make three things clear: a market existed for anti-Wolsey satire throughout the 1520s; the moral interlude/morality play structure could be (and was) adapted to participate in this market; and *Magnyfycence* was being read as Wolsey satire widely enough that at least a decade after its composition it was being imitated by a more obvious Wolsey satirist.

Godly Queene Hester repeatedly demonstrates the crystallizing process through which particular anti-Wolsey tropes were shaped in the early part of the sixteenth century. These features—Wolsey's clothing, his base birth, his ecclesiastic pluralities—all feature in insults not initially specific to Wolsey, but through repetition came to represent the cardinal. It is difficult to determine what lasting literary impact *Godly Queene Hester* might have had: the lack of manuscript evidence might suggest a lack of interest, but equally manuscript circulation might have been limited by the still-powerful Wolsey or others. The existence of only one print edition is equally problematic: there might not have been a public demand for the text, or it might have been thought too impolitic to print at a time when the young Elizabeth I relied on powerful counselors and favorites. In addition, the textual parallels between Hester and Katherine of Aragon may well have dissuaded printers from producing new editions during Elizabeth's lifetime. Nevertheless, the mere existence of such a play, coupled with the increasing identification of these particular tropes with Thomas Wolsey throughout the sixteenth century, indicates a clear process of crystallization of these characterizations around the cardinal.

CHAPTER 2

"A vysage of trwthe": George Cavendish's Characterizations of Wolsey

After the death of Henry VIII in 1547, England entered a period of political and religious turmoil. As the English Reformation gathered pace during the reign of Edward VI and suffered setbacks during the Roman revivals of Mary I, writers on both sides of the confessional divide saw the propagandist and polemical value in exploiting the burgeoning negative imagery of Wolsey as typified by writers like John Skelton and the anonymous author of *Godly Queene Hester*. In particular, the appearance of the first Reformist English histories—which almost exclusively condemned Wolsey for his perceived self-service—prompted, in part, a renewal of interest in the cardinal as a vehicle for anti-Roman sentiment. It was in this literary environment that George Cavendish (1494–1562?) produced his own characterizations of Wolsey.

The works of George Cavendish represent a unique opportunity for scholars to compare poetry and prose characterizations of Cardinal Wolsey authored by someone who had close personal ties to and professional experience with the cardinal. Cavendish served as gentleman-usher to the cardinal from some point before 1522 until Wolsey's death in November 1530.[1] Cavendish was required to keep close company with his master: Cavendish performed many roles, but primarily was entrusted with ensuring that logistical arrangements reflected (or increased) his master's status. Cavendish was entrusted to act on Wolsey's behalf on personal matters (even when the cardinal was on state business), and might be best described as a lead servant with sufficient personal status to enforce compliance and to afford Wolsey appropriate companionship.[2] The gentleman prefix indicates Cavendish's own social rank: he was born into a moderately wealthy Suffolk family of civil servants and courtiers. His younger brother William was knighted for his services in royal employ, and would go on to marry the famous Bess of Hardwick. In acting as gentleman-usher, Cavendish had ample access to Wolsey; the two apparently enjoyed a close and friendly relationship until Wolsey's death. After the

1 *ODNB*, "Cavendish, George (1494–1562?)"; see also Mike Pincombe, "A Place in the Shade: George Cavendish and *de causibus* tragedy," in *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Literature*, 375.

2 The *OED* defines the role as "An officer at court, in a dignitary's household, etc., whose duty it is on occasion to walk or go before a person of high rank; also, a chamberlain."

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cardinal's death, Cavendish withdrew from public service, turning down an offer of an appointment from Henry VIII and instead choosing to retire to his family's holdings in Surrey.[3]

Despite his intention to retire from public life, Cavendish was sufficiently motivated to write his defensive *Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey* (written between 1554 and 1558) in part due to the increasing amount of anti-Wolsey literature published in the second half of the sixteenth century. Indeed, he felt moved enough to write the *Life* that he broke off from writing a collection of *de casibus* poems set in the voices of a variety of Henrician, Edwardian, and Marian political figures, later collectively called the *Metrical Visions* (c. 1552–1558). These two texts provide a counterpoint to the mid-sixteenth century chronicles, of which those by Polydore Vergil and Edward Hall were the most prominent. Vergil and Hall were largely critical of Wolsey and his policies. Hall's *The Vnion of the Two Noble and Illustre Famelies of Lancastre and York*, first published by Richard Grafton in 1548, in particular was likely to have spurred Cavendish to defend Wolsey. Vergil's comments on Wolsey did not appear until the third edition of his *Anglica historia* in 1555 and may have reinforced Cavendish's resolve to continue writing his *Life.* Indeed, Cavendish explicitly states that his *Life* was to contradict the "historygraffers of Cronycles of prynces" who "with there blaphemous trompe" had "spred abrode innvmerable lyes."[4] Cavendish, a moderate Romanist writing during the comparatively brief conservative resurgence in the reign of Mary, felt compelled to combat what he saw as the propagandist efforts of the evangelicals to manipulate the life of Wolsey so as to represent "a vysage of trwthe, as thowghe it weare a perfet veritie."[5] In many ways, the revelation of truth is the guiding principle of both the *Life* and the *Metrical Visions.* In the *Metrical Visions* Cavendish was writing poetic attempts at creating a didactic framework for revealing the ephemeral nature of wealth, power, and the fickleness of Fortune; the *Life*, by contrast, was conceived of as a text that might provide a more literal truth regarding Wolsey's life. The *Life* is not merely a defense of Wolsey, but is also an attack on the increasingly polemical elements found in texts growing out of the humanist history. In addition, Cavendish's texts provide an ideal opportunity to see how a mid-century author reacted to the dominant contemporary characterizations of Wolsey (as provided by authors like Hall), and how he himself adopted and adapted those characterizations in his own works to

3 See Richard S. Sylvester's introduction to *The Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey* (London: Early English Text Society, 1959), xxi.

4 *Life*, 11; 1.

5 *Life*, 1.

better represent the history he had experienced firsthand. These texts act as valuable mid-century touchpoints, which allow us to analyze representations both of Wolsey as an individual and as a subject of discourse; in addition, we can also see how Cavendish discussed history itself—in two different genres—in reaction to Vergil's and Hall's "untruths."

To better understand Cavendish's characterizations of Wolsey and their significance, let us first consider the *Metrical Visions*, beginning with the Wolsey poem *Le Historye/Cardinalis Eboracensis* and then setting that text against the other poems in the collection. Next we look at Cavendish's poetic heritage with a particular focus on the debt he owed to John Skelton. The discussion centers on how Cavendish used *de casibus* commonplaces to provide both a moral lesson for readers and a more personal ruminative lament for the cardinal and the political figures who once dominated the former gentleman-usher's life. Following the *Metrical Visions*, we discuss the *Life* and the images it contains in chronological order. This structure helps to demonstrate Cavendish's technique of chronological telescoping, whereby Cavendish compressed the length of time between key moments in Wolsey's career as well as alleging that Wolsey completed particular diplomatic feats more quickly than he actually did. It also allows us to consider the textual effect of Cavendish's interrupting his work on the *Metrical Visions* in order to write the *Life*.

The *Metrical Visions*: Rota Fortuna and Wolsey's Lamentations

Though the *Life* is an extraordinarily valuable text, it often eclipses Cavendish's poetic works. During roughly the same period as he was writing the *Life* Cavendish also composed a series of poems now referred to as the *Metrical Visions* (the title given to the collection by Samuel W. Singer in his 1825 edition). To understand Cavendish's images of Wolsey, it is crucial that we do not make the same mistake and allow the *Metrical Visions* to be eclipsed by the *Life*. The *Metrical Visions* is unique: it is a collection of first-person *de casibus* poems written by a court insider who almost certainly was personally acquainted with most (if not all) of his subjects. They reveal early Tudor poetical practice and invention, provide firsthand (if poeticized) accounts of a range of Tudor court figures, and reflect a moderate Catholic's personal politics and religious beliefs. Perhaps understandably, Tudor literature—particularly that literature which deals with the great men and women of the period—has typically presented very strong authorial opinions, both evangelical and conservative. The *Metrical Visions* in particular demonstrate that Cavendish, while resistant to the Edwardian Reformation, deplored the cycle of religious violence that had

most recently manifested in 1549. The *Metrical Visions* also provide an essential mid-century point of contact proving that Cavendish (and by extension other early and mid-Tudor writers) was participating in a continuous and developing literary tradition firmly connected to medieval *de casibus* poetry and which foreshadowed Elizabethan pastoral poetry.

Exact dating of the *Metrical Visions* is difficult, but A. S. G. Edwards makes a compelling case for the bulk of the poems to have been written between 1552 and 1554, with the final poem written in 1558 and the entire collection copied fair at the same time.[6] The *terminus ad quem* is June 24, 1558: a date specified by Cavendish as the day he finished the holograph collection found in the Egerton Manuscript.[7] For his starting date of 1552, Edwards argues that the final references to Mary as the "mayden queen" would make most sense if the Mary poem was written prior to her wedding in 1554, and that the Mary poem is one of the final poems written in the pre-1554 section, necessitating a relatively long period set aside before 1554 to allow for the composition of the preceding poems.[8] While Edwards's assessment necessitates a degree of speculation about the individual dates of composition of the poems, it is extraordinarily difficult to date these poems based on the paucity of evidence. Based on Edwards's argument regarding the 1552 *terminus a quo*, it seems reasonable to assume that the first poem in the series—the Wolsey poem—was written prior to the composition of the *Life*.

The poems in the *Metrical Visions* provide first-person poetic narratives from the perspective of Cavendish, Wolsey, Henry VIII, and Mary I, as well as other leading figures of the age (including the Lord Protector Edward Seymour, duke of Somerset, and Sir Thomas Arundel). These poems, framed as though they were reported speech, represent a characterization at a remove and are cast in the morally didactic *de casibus* style. In style and form they are similar to the poems found in the *Mirror for Magistrates*, and it is not impossible that some of the *Mirror* authors read the *Metrical Visions*.

Despite the value of these poems (and valuable they certainly are, written by a conservative civil servant with firsthand knowledge of the main characters), they have been studied only sporadically. Though they are generally acknowledged not to reflect the same skill with poetry that Cavendish displayed with prose, the *Metrical Visions* do provide a useful contrast with the *Life* as well as demonstrating a poetic adaptation of Tudor *de casibus* tragedy. The *Life* was

6 George Cavendish, *Metrical Visions*, ed. A. S. G. Edwards (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1980), 7.

7 Edwards, 7.

8 Edwards, 7–8.

written to combat what Cavendish saw as the slurs against Wolsey and "truth" by Reformist propagandists, but the *Metrical Visions* were written as a moral tragedy (though certainly the poems had their own propagandist purpose in supporting Mary I). They therefore have a decidedly didactic tone, the reason for which Cavendish explained to his readers in the *Prologus*:

> Thoughe I onwoerthe / this tragedy do begyne
> Of pardon I pray / the reders in meke wyse
> And to correct / where they se fault therin.
> Reputyng it for lake / of connyng exercyse.
> The cause that moved me / to this enterprice.
> Specyally was / that all estates myght se
> What it is to trust to ffortunes mutabylite.[9]

What provoked these musings was, in true medieval fashion, a pastoral daydream ruminating on Fortune's fickleness. Cavendish was strongly influenced by the medieval *de casibus* tragedy tradition and helped adapt it for the mid-Tudor audience. The *Metrical Visions* owe a particularly large debt to John Lydgate's *The Fall of Princes* (printed in 1527), itself a loose translation of Giovanni Boccaccio's mid-fourteenth century *De casibus virorum illustrium*. This approach was a popular one in the sixteenth century; the influence of Lydgate on the sixteenth-century fashion for "fall" literature (in the manner of *The Fall of Princes* and the *Mirror for Magistrates*) was rather strong.[10] The vision-poetry and *de casibus* traditions are essential elements of the *Metrical Visions*; in addition, Cavendish frames his poems using *eidolopoeia*, wherein the dead speak for themselves. The poetic structure and heritage provide a means for didacticism, lamentation, and authorial distancing from popular or unpopular sentiments about glorified or vilified figures from the recent past.

Cavendish begins the *Metrical Visions* by describing how he came to wonder at the turning of Fortune's wheel:

> In the monyth of Iune / I lyeng sole alon
> Vnder the vmber of an Oke / with bowes pendaunt
> Whan Phebus in Gemynye / had his course ouergoon
> An entred Cancer / a sygne retrogradaunt
> In a mean measure / his beames Radyaunt

9 *Metrical Visions*, f. 95r.

10 Derek Pearsall, *John Lydgate* (London: Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1970), 251–252.

Approchyng Lion / than mused I in mynd
Of ffikkellnes of ffortune / and of the Course of kynd

How some are by ffortune / exalted to Riches
And often suche / as most vnworthy be
And some oppressed / in langor and syknes /
Some waylyng lakkyng welthe / by wretched pouertie
Some in bayle and bondage / and some at libertie
With other moo gyftes / of ffortune Varyable.
Some pleasaunt / Somme mean / and some onprofitable.[11]

The *Metrical Visions* thus begins on a pessimistic note. Fortune may be open-handed with her gifts, but despite the ostensibly random nature of her bounty, Cavendish feels that "often" those exalted by Fortune "most vnworthy be." Cavendish explains that his is a tale of Fortune's changeable nature; as Wolsey's story shows, Fortune can raise a commoner to the heights of government and the Church, but just as quickly can reduce that same man to poverty, infamy, and death.

In these Lydgatian tales of the vagarity of Fortune, Cavendish argues, we ought to take moral instruction. He himself was forced by the moral imperative of the lessons in the narrative to compose these poems:

I well considered / myn obscure blyndnes
So that non excuse could I se or fynd
But that my tyme / I spend in idelnes . . .

But to eschewe all Ociosite
Of ffortunes fykellnes / hereafter shall I wright
How greatest estates / she overthrowyth by myght.[12]

Cavendish's *Prologus* clearly set out the parameters and purpose for his poems: he is writing an account of the truths to be learned from these *de casibus* tragedies, even if the poems themselves have little to do with historic truth. This sentiment is not specific to Wolsey, of course; he is only the first subject to be considered. In total, we hear from twenty-two individuals directly in addition to several laments, epitaphs, and envoys from the author. The characters mentioned range in importance from relatively minor figures like

11 *Metrical Visions*, ll. 1–14, f. 94^{r}.

12 *Metrical Visions*, ll. 23–25, f. 94^{v}–95^{r}.

Mark Smeaton—a court musician executed for his alleged adulterous affair with Anne Boleyn—to Henry VIII himself. Cavendish felt himself obligated to explain the doings of Wolsey (and these other figures) out of a sense of moral necessity: the voyeuristic pleasure afforded by these glimpses into the courts of the Tudor monarchs is balanced by the author's attempts to demonstrate the fundamental hollowness of wealth and power. The *Metrical Visions* clearly were written with a focused sense of the author's purpose, the tenor of which fills the poems, from *Le Historye/Cardinalis Eboracensis* to the final work in the collection, an envoy from the author to his book.

The *Metrical Visions* differs—perhaps surprisingly so—from the *Life* in tone. While the *Life* is an explicit defense of Wolsey, the *Metrical Visions* presents a far less flattering view of the cardinal. However, it is difficult to ascertain exactly why Cavendish was inconsistent in his representation of Wolsey. Of course, there is no indication that Cavendish was not devoted to Wolsey, but he was not so defensive of his former employer that he could not see a number of the cardinal's negative qualities. However, though Wolsey was long dead when the *Metrical Visions* were written, the other poems in the collection were about subjects who were more recently in power (Mary I in particular). These more contemporary political considerations may explain Cavendish's reluctance to commit himself fully to criticizing former monarchs. However, we must be careful to avoid hyperbolizing Cavendish's political impact.[13] While it is certainly true that Cavendish blamed Anne for providing the spark that set off Henry VIII's divorce and England's break from Rome, it would be overstating the case to draw a connection between Cavendish's anti-Boleyn attitude and his readers suffering punishment as a result of discussing or possessing his texts. There is no indication (thus far, at least) that Elizabethans were persecuted for possessing either the *Life* or *Metrical Visions.* The *Life* was circulated widely in manuscript, and was utilized extensively by both John Stow and Raphael Holinshed throughout the early Elizabethan period.[14] It therefore seems unlikely that the moderate Cavendish's texts were subjected to sustained or focused censorship, nonetheless, the author chose to employ standard authorial distancing techniques. The final poem, *Thauctor to / hys boke*, confirms Cavendish's concerns about writing on such potentially dangerous subjects. The poem acts as an *apologia* for any offense (poetical or political) the author may have committed:

13 Paul L. Wiley, "Renaissance Exploitation of Cavendish's *Life of Wolsey*," *Studies in Philology* 43, no. 2 (1946), 121.

14 Wiley, 127. The Catalogue of English Literary Manuscripts counts fifty-three extant copies likely produced during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Thus not presumyng / of learnyng ne eloquence /
Hope made me shove / the boote frome the shoore /
Desiryng nothyng / for my farre or expence /
But oonly good wyll / I aske no moore.[15]

Certainly this sort of hyperbolic apology was not uncommon for Tudor writers, and while the imagery is pleasing, it cannot be said to be groundbreaking. The self-deprecation of Cavendish's admitting that he would not presume to extol his "learnyng ne eloquence" is standard fare. However, Cavendish does make a few comments which delineate his purpose in writing, particularly in the later verses of the *Thauctor to / hys boke*:

And pryncypally / this my worke for to assist
I humbly beseche that lord that is eternall
To defend my penne / that wrot this with my / fyst
To be my. savegard / my stafe and my wall
And consequently. for feare / least I shold fall
In the daynger of the learned / and honorable sort
I pray theme all / my lamenes to support /

. . .

Whan thou my boke / commest in to the prease.
Bothe of the wyse / and learned multitude /
To Excuse thyn auctor / thou canst do no lesse
Wantyng learnyng / and of vtteraunce rude
Whiche dyd neuer / thys enterprise entrude
Trustyng other of wytt or learnyng. /
But for an. excersice / and non other thyng //[16]

He reiterates his intent that the *Metrical Visions* portray his subjects as models for instruction, either by imitation of their virtues or through rejection of their vices. Cavendish also demonstrates a keen awareness of the potential for his poems to cause offense; he begs his readers to forgive the "daynger of the learned," who in this turbulent period of socio-political upheaval were often caught on the wrong side of a new monarch's philosophical ideals. Furthermore, Cavendish was also in danger of trespassing on the precinct

15 *Metrical Visions*, ll. 2397–2401, f. 148^{v}.

16 *Metrical Visions*, ll. 2405–2411, 2419–2425, f. 149^{r}.

of the literally learned; he certainly would have been aware of the poetical, pedagogical, and theological arguments waged in the press (in both senses of the word) and, not being highly educated, ventured to distance himself from those disagreements.

Though Cavendish attempts to mitigate any offending passages by claiming the *Metrical Visions* to be an "excersice / and non other thing," the poems are often explicitly critical of their narrators. In addition, he begs his book to carry his apology "in to the prease," presumably interpreting "press" as "crowd."[17] Cavendish may have also meant the printing press; this seems less likely, given the structure of the stanza and the lack of evidence suggesting any attempt was made to print the *Metrical Visions.* Despite the *Life*'s popularity, given that there are only three known extant manuscript copies of the *Metrical Visions*, it does not appear that Cavendish's poems made it very far into the "prease" in either sense.

Cardinal Wolsey in the *Metrical Visions*

The first of the lives examined in the *Metrical Visions* is Wolsey's. Although we cannot be certain Cavendish intended the ordering of poems to be as they have come to us, the impact on the reader remains substantial: Wolsey leads a procession of the great and notable to speak from the afterlife. The *Life* demonstrates Cavendish's genuine affection for and loyalty to Wolsey, whereas the Wolsey-poem (*Le Historye/Cardinalis Eboracensis*, hereafter referred to as *Le Historye*) provides insight into Cavendish's awareness of Wolsey's flaws. *Le Historye* highlights some of the cardinal's flaws in its opening lines:

> O ffortune / quod he / shold I on the complayn
> Or of my necligence that I susteyn this smart
> Thy doble visage hathe led me to this trayn
> Ffor at my begynnyng / thou dydest ay take my part
> Vntill ambysion had puffed vppe my hart
> With vainglory. honor. and vsurped dignyte.
> Fforgettyng cleane my naturall mendycitie //[18]

In this passage—the first stanza from *Le Historye*—Cavendish has Wolsey bemoan how Fortune's gifts seduced him into "ambysion" and "vsurped dig-

17 *OED*, "press," 2.5a.

18 *Metrical Visions*, ll. 85–91, f. 96r.

nyte." Though he blames Fortune squarely for his disastrous fall from power, Cavendish's Wolsey does recognize that he allowed ambition to overwhelm his natural humility ("mendycitie"). Lamenting his pride in hindsight, he apologizes to Henry VIII for usurping his king's power:

> Alas my souerayn lord / thou didest me avaunce
> And settest me vppe in thys great pompe and pryde
> And gavest to me thy realme in gouernaunce
> Thy pryncely will / why did I sett a side
> And folowed myn owen / consideryng not the tyde
> Howe after a floode / an Ebbe commythe on a pace
> That to consider / in my tryhumphe / I lakked grace /[19]

Cavendish highlights Wolsey's lack of circumspection; instead of considering the natural ebb and flow of power and preferment and planning accordingly, he overreached himself and was struck down all the harder for it: as we have seen, this is a theme routinely employed by anti-Wolsey satire.

Like the rest of the *Metrical Visions, Le Historye* has a strong performative element. Wolsey addresses the reader directly, speaking from a posthumous stage and exhorting his listeners to learn from his mistakes. This plaintive poem projects a strong sense of regret and didacticism familiar to readers of *de casibus* verse, with lines like, "Who workyth fraude/ often is disceyved / As in a myrror/ ye may behold in / me."[20] This remark is particularly interesting coming from Cavendish; unfortunately, he does not specify the "fraude" to which Wolsey is admitting. Wolsey's ghost continues in a similar vein, recounting how he used his "high preemynence" to secure benefices for himself:

> My legantyn prerogatyve / was myche to myn avayle
> By vertue wherof. / I had thys highe preemynence /
> All vacant benefices. / I dyd them strayt retaylle
> Presentyng than my Clarke / asson as I had intellygence
> I preventid the patron / the vaylled no resistence.
> All bysshoppes and prelattes / durst not oons denay.
> They doughtyd / so my power /they myght not dysobey. /[21]

19 *Metrical Visions*, ll. 183–189, f. 98r.

20 *Metrical Visions*, ll. 169–170, f. 98r.

21 *Metrical Visions*, ll. 141–147, f. 97r.

Despite his willingness in life to abuse his authority for personal benefit, Wolsey in death is filled with regret. Of the twenty-five stanzas in *Le Historye*, eight are dedicated to rehearsals of the lofty heights of his power and wealth. Despite the wistful tone in which Wolsey delivers these stanzas, the remaining seventeen comprehensively undercut the vanities with which the cardinal surrounded himself. Despite Wolsey's admission in *Le Historye* that his fall was precipitated by his indulgence of his pride, the deceased cardinal is still largely a sympathetic figure. Though Wolsey was guilty of "wordly vanytes," he earns the sympathy of the reader by a show of humility—as we have seen—and by reminding the reader of the true villains of his story:

> Yet notwithstandyng / my corage was so hault
> Dispight of myn ennemyes. / Rubbed me on the gall
> Who conspired together. / to take me with a fault.
> They travelled without triall / to geve me a fall /
> I therfore entendyd / to trie my frends all
> to fforrayn potentates wrott my letters playn
> Desireng ther ayd / to restore me to fauor agayn
>
> Myn ennemyes perceyvyng / caught therof dysdayn
> Doughtyng the daynger / dreamed on the dought
> In Councell consultyng. / my sewte to restrayn
> Accused me of treason /and brought it so abought
> That travellyng to my triall / or I could trie it owte
> Deathe with his dart / strake me for the nons
> In Leycester full lowe / where nowe lyethe my boons[22]

Following Wolsey's own admission of guilt, this excerpt shows a glimmer of the cardinal's former pride. Though willing to assume responsibility for his personal faults, Cavendish's Wolsey cannot resist pointing out that while his fall may have been caused in a general way by his flaws, the fall was engineered more specifically by Wolsey's enemies and the shifting attentions of Fortune. Speaking with the unimpeachable authority of the dead, Wolsey condemns his enemies even as he lavishly declares his humility and culpability.

In many ways, the image of Wolsey's elaborate copper sarcophagus that follows reinforces exactly this conceit. It is a metonym for the poem as a whole as well as acting as a *memento mori*. It is used as a potent metaphor for the man: grandiose and ambitious, but ultimately empty of (moral) substance, as

22 *Metrical Visions*, l. 219, f. 99^{r}; ll. 204–217, ff. 98^{v}–99^{r}.

Wolsey was buried in Leicester Abbey.[23] As a reflection on death, the description of the coffin comes complete with exhortations to the reader to profit by the unfortunate cardinal's tale:

> Loo nowe may you se / what it is to trust
> In worldly vanytes / that voydyth with the wynd
> Ffor deathe in a moment / consumyth all to dust
> No honor. no glory. / that euer man cowld fynd
> But tyme with hys tyme / puttythe all owt of mynd
> Ffor tyme in breafe tyme / duskyth the hystory
> Of them that long tyme / lyved in glory
>
> Where is my Tombe / that I made for the nons.
> Wrought of ffynne Cooper. / that cost many a pound
> To couche in my Carion / and my Rotten boons.
> All is but vaynglory / nowe haue I found
> And small to the purpose / whan I ame in the ground
> What dothe it avaylle me / all that I haue /
> Seying I ame deade / and layed in my grave /[24]

The ornate tomb is a symbol of Wolsey's hubris; Cavendish contrasts the beauty of the "fine copper" with the "carrion" and "rotten bones" of the dead cardinal. The tomb was commissioned by Wolsey sometime before June 1524 from the Florentine sculptor Benedetto da Rovezzano, who was allegedly instructed to ensure that Wolsey's tomb was "twice as sumptuous, beautiful and skilful as that of Henry VII," whose own tomb was used as the basis for pricing Wolsey's as it was the closest comparable work available.[25] The sarcophagus acts as a potent metaphor, but is awkward coming from the cardinal's main mid-century defender. It is therefore necessary to adjust our understanding of Cavendish's image of Cardinal Wolsey, as it would be overly simplistic to

23 Wolsey's tomb was not occupied by its creator, as his unexpected illness and death necessitated a quick burial at Leicester Abbey. Instead, it was appropriated by the state after his death and stored in Westminster and was intended initially to house Henry's body. After lying empty for nearly three centuries, the sarcophagus now contains the remains of Lord Nelson in the North Crypt of St. Paul's Cathedral. See P. G. Lindley, "Playing Check-Mate with Royal Majesty? Wolsey's Patronage of Italian Renaissance Sculpture," in *Cardinal Wolsey: Church, State and Art*, ed. S. J. Gunn and P. G. Lindley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 264.

24 *Metrical Visions*, ll. 218–231, f. 99r.

25 Lindley, 264.

state that Cavendish was only trying to defend his former master through portraying Wolsey in a positive light. To understand Cavendish's Wolsey, we must accept that both the charismatic, industrious Wolsey of the *Life* and the regret-filled, deflated Wolsey of the *Metrical Visions* are, to an extent, the same character. Cavendish was not quite able to square the negative implications of the *memento mori* of Wolsey's sarcophagus with his clear desire to portray his former master well, but this conflicting image (or pair of images) points to a genuine rehabilitative attempt to present a more layered and realistic—perhaps truthful, and ultimately positive—image of the cardinal.

Le Historye in Context

Le Historye certainly can be read in isolation and, if read in this manner, provides a nuanced and emotional poetic lamentation for the dead cardinal. However, to more fully understand Cavendish's characterization of his former master, it is well worth placing *Le Historye* in a wider context. The other poems found in the *Metrical Visions* all deal with the same theme: the rise and fall of great men and women in the Tudor court, and the moral lessons that the reader might draw from them. It must be understood, then, that all these poems are organized around this central principle and thus have much in common: to discuss all the poems in this particular context would necessitate a degree of repetition. However, there are a few poems in the collection which, when placed alongside *Le Historye*, highlight features worth discussing.

The first poem to follow *Le Historye* (and therefore coming second in the collection) is *Vycount/Rocheford*, which discusses the rise and fall of George Boleyn (*c.* 1504–1536), viscount Rochford and brother of Anne Boleyn. This poem aptly demonstrates the wide range of figures depicted in the *Metrical Visions.* Unlike Wolsey, George Boleyn was born into the highest reaches of the English aristocracy (his father was Thomas Boleyn, later earl of Wiltshire [1476/7–1539], and his mother was Elizabeth Howard [d. 1538], daughter of Thomas Howard, second duke of Norfolk), and, as his character proudly laments in *Vycount/Rocheford*, "God gave me graces / dame. nature did hir part / Endewed me with gyftes / of naturall qualities."[26] The juxtaposition between the butcher's son who came "ffrome pouertie to plentie" and the scion of a wealthy and powerful family is stark and is consciously positioned in the second stanzas of these two poems respectively. Despite the obvious contrasts between the two men, Cavendish emphasizes their similarities.

26 *Metrical Visions*, ll. 281–282, f. 100^{v}.

Wolsey's common birth is largely glossed over, with the cardinal focusing instead on his many offices and honors and the rapidity with which they were gained. Similarly, in *Vycount* George Boleyn does not mention his high birth, but instead speaks about his unusual and praiseworthy gifts which led him to high preferment:

> God gave me graces / dame. nature did hir part
> Endewed me with gyftes / of naturall qualities
> Dame Eloquence also / taught me the arte
> In meter and prose / to make plesaunt dities
> And ffortune preferred me / to highe dignytes
> In suche aboundance / that combred was my wytt
> To render God thankes / that gave me eche wytt
>
> Yt hath not byn knowyn / nor seldeme seen
> That any of my yeres / byfore thys day
> In to the prevy councell / preferred hath byn
> My souerayn lord / in his chamber did me assay
> Or yeres thryes nye / my lyfe had past a way
> A rare thyng swer / seldome or neuer hard
> So yong a man / so highely to be preferred[27]

George's natural abilities are what gain him admission to the Privy Council at a young age, and these qualities are shared by Wolsey. In both cases, these two men rose quickly thanks to the gifts Fortune and God had given them: in both cases, they fell because they had "clean forgott" God and their duties.[28]

Though Wolsey and George Boleyn share the same general fault, they differ substantially in their acceptance of responsibility for their respective fates. It is crucial to Cavendish's characterization of Wolsey that the cardinal does not entirely blame Fortune for his fall from power: instead, he constantly questions whether it was Fate, his errors, or a lack of ability which toppled him. Indeed, the first lines of *Le History* indicate this conflict: "O ffortune / quod he / shold I on the complayn / Or of my necligence that I susteyn this smart?"[29] By contrast, George Boleyn blames not negligence, but Fate and sinfulness on a level far greater than Wolsey's. This is perhaps understandable, since George was executed for incestuous adultery with the then-queen, his sister Anne.

27 *Metrical Visions*, ll. 281–294, f. 100^{v}.

28 *Metrical Visions*, l. 295, f. 101^{r}.

29 *Metrical Visions*, ll. 85–86, f. 96^{r}.

The difference in outcome between these two men is small: they both have gone from extraordinary wealth and power to the impoverished condition of those whose reputations have been ruined. The differing attitudes of Boleyn and Wolsey, however, have a substantial impact on representing their characters: George Boleyn takes little personal responsibility, whereas Wolsey wonders throughout *Le Historye* if it was simply Fortune's fickleness or his own negligence that caused his fall. The juxtaposition of Wolsey's more mature lamentations and George Boleyn's more youthful statements sets the cardinal apart as a intrinsically honorable man who overreached himself and (posthumously) realizes his mistake, rather than a more fundamentally flawed sinner like Boleyn.

Another poem that deals with the contrasts and similarities between Wolsey's flaws and those of other Henrician courtiers is *Marke alias/Smeton*. This poem in particular deserves attention because unlike *Vycount*, when placed alongside *Le Historye* it presents a more nuanced consideration of Wolsey's own sinful desires. Mark Smeaton (c. 1512–1536) was a court musician executed for his alleged adulterous affair with Anne Boleyn. Despite the obvious differences between the two men, there is a connection between Wolsey and Smeaton. Both Wolsey and Smeaton came from humble backgrounds and both men were taken by the king "*de stercore*" (as Smeaton describes it).[30] Henry elevated both men beyond all expectations, and both were undone by their unbridled desires: in Wolsey's case, greed (for wealth and power); for Smeaton, lust. While Smeaton's sin was sexual and the cardinal's was not, the moral lesson the minstrel learns is the same as Wolsey's; a lack of discretion and circumspection on the part of a courtier is a fatal flaw, and overindulgence in the vices of the court leads to disaster:

> Loo what it is / fraylle youthe to avaunce
> And to sett hyme vppe / in welthy estate.
> Or sad discression / had taken hym in gouernaunce
> To bridell his lust whiche nowe comes to late.
> And thoughe by greate fauor / I lease but my pate.
> Yet desrued haue I / cruelly to be martred/
> As I ame iuged / to be hanged drawn and quartered.[31]

Cavendish treads lightly around Smeaton's crimes, as the poem itself only mentions the reasons for Smeaton's downfall in a vague injunction against lustful-

30 *Metrical Visions*, l. 497, f. 105^{v}.

31 *Metrical Visions*, ll. 505–511. f. 106^{r}.

ness. Instead, Cavendish has Smeaton focus almost exclusively on the dangers of advancing commoners to the highest reaches of the court: a safer approach than mentioning Smeaton's specific indiscretions.

The final comparative that is essential to consider is between *Le Historye* and *Cromwell/Erle of Essex*. A comparison between Wolsey and his onetime secretary Thomas Cromwell is almost inevitable, particularly as Cavendish would not only have known Cromwell personally, but would have worked with him for several years when Cromwell was Wolsey's lawyer and, later, secretary: both these men were plucked from relative obscurity and common birth by Henry to become the first ministers of the realm. Both men possessed an extraordinary talent for identifying the king's desires and folding the accomplishment of those desires into the mechanisms of bureaucracy. The obvious differences between Cromwell and Wolsey (one a Reformist layman and the other a Romanist prelate) are, by this view, rendered moot: the two men's similarity in handling the capricious Henry was rewarded in an identical manner. Cavendish draws out these common features in the recitation of Cromwell's advancements early in the poem. As in *Le Historye*, in *Cromwell* Cavendish emphasizes the rapidity of the subject's promotions and explains to the reader how these offices contributed to Cromwell's bureaucratic centrality:

> I Rayned and Ruled / in highe estymacion
> Ffrome office to office / assendyng the degrees
> Ffirst in the prevye councell was my foundacion
> And cheafe secretory / with all vauntages and ffees
> . . .
>
> The title of vicegerent / I had in my stile.
> Gouernor of the prelacye / and of the lawes devyne.
> Also master of the Rolles / I was in short while
> Thus began my glory / to floryshe and to shyne /
> As thoughe ffortune wold / hyr whele to me resigne
> Vnto thestate of Baron / she did me than auaunce
> And next to an Earle / thus was ffortunes chaunce[32]

The rapid recitation of Cromwell's promotions mirrors the early structure of *Le Historye* and sets up clear parallels to that poem (and indeed, the *de casibus* organizing principle of all the poems in the collection). However, it is two stanzas later that Cromwell makes a surprising comparison:

32 *Metrical Visions*, ll. 687–690, 694–700, ff. 110r–v.

> To Aman the Agagite / I may be compared
> That invented lawes / Goddes people to confound
> And for Mardocheus / a Galhowsse he prepared
> To hang hyme theron / if he might be found
> Whiche he erected fyvetye Cubyttes frome the ground
> Wheron Mardocheus to hang / was all his trust
> Yet was hyme self hanged on theme furst /[33]

As we have seen in chapter 1, the Book of Esther was previously appropriated by the author of *Godly Queene Hester* as a framework for his anti-Wolsey satire. That Cavendish chose this particular Biblical text is particularly interesting precisely because of this earlier usage. While it is entirely possible that Cavendish made the same connection between Wolsey and Aman as the anonymous *Hester* author did, it remains a distinct possibility that as a man of letters with a strong personal connection to Wolsey Cavendish had at least some awareness of the *Hester* text and wrote this stanza as a redemptive reassigning on behalf of his former master. Regardless of Cavendish's knowledge of *Hester* this stanza functions as a clear window into the common features of the public conceptions of both Wolsey and Cromwell. Critics of both men drew connections to the same base text over the course of nearly three decades, despite substantial social, political, and religious changes.

Placing the *Visions*

Considering the possibility of Cavendish's contact with *Godly Queene Hester* raises valuable questions about Cavendish's source material and place in the sixteenth-century Wolsey canon. In addition to its value as a poetic representation of Wolsey—crucial as it is—the *Metrical Visions* also provides further evidence of the thematic links connecting authors concerned with Wolsey across the sixteenth century. Beyond the connection to *Hester* identified, there are Skeltonic associations worth exploring. A. S. G. Edwards hypothesizes that "the opening lines of the [*Metrical Visions*] may owe something to the beginning of Skelton's *Garland of Laurel*." He identifies a list of similarities which raise the feasibility of a direct connection between Skelton and Cavendish:

> There are at least sufficient coincidences between the beginnings of the two works to suggest the possibility [of a direct connection]: both open

33 *Metrical Visions*, ll. 708–714, f. 110^{v}.

> with an astronomical allusion involving a "retrogradaunt" sign, a solitary narrator musing on fortune's mutability near an oak tree (or in the case of *Garland*, its stump). In addition, there are occasional Skeltonic echoes in the *Metrical Visions*, which, together with Cavendish's known tendency to plagiarize, reinforce such a hypothesis.[34]

Edwards does not consider the Skelton-Cavendish connection further, nor does he mention *Godly Queene Hester.* However, as discussed in chapter 1, Wolsey certainly was aware of Skelton's poetry as early as 1522: the same year Cavendish appears to have joined the cardinal's service. As Wolsey's gentleman-usher, it is eminently feasible that Cavendish would have read Skelton's texts or perhaps even have met the man himself. It is surprising, however, that a defender of the cardinal would consciously imitate one of Wolsey's best-known early detractors. None of the excerpts in which Edwards sees Skelton's influence appear in *Le Historye*; after the similarities in the *Prologus*, Edwards identifies a short section of the *Norres* poem (about Henry Norris, c. 1500–1536, courtier and friend to Henry VIII) in which he sees echoes of *The Doughty Duke of Albany*.[35] The next section comes from *Mark alias/Smeton*. In the final lines of the poem ("Yet deserued haue I / cruelly to be martred. As I ame iuged / to be hanged drawn and quartered."),[36] Edwards sees a connection with lines 739–741 of *Why Come Ye Nat To Courte?*:[37]

> Wherefore he suffred payn,
> Was headyd, drawen, and quarterd,
> And dyed stynkingly marterd.[38]

Whereas an obvious similarity exists in language and subject, a more specific connection here is untenable. Describing the fate of traitors in such language is hardly unique. In addition, Skelton is making reference to the fate of Jean Cardinal Balue (1421–1491), though Skelton was mistaken: Cardinal Balue was not executed and in fact died a natural death after a long legatine career.[39] It is unlikely that Cavendish would intentionally connect Wolsey to a foreign figure (with all the xenophobic concerns that might raise), particularly a contentious

34 Edwards, notes to ll. 1–7.
35 Edwards, notes to ll. 379–380.
36 *Metrical Visions*, ll. 510–511, f. 105^{v}.
37 Edwards, notes to ll. 510–511.
38 *Why Come Ye Nat To Courte?*, ll. 739–741.
39 Scattergood, notes to ll. 718–741.

one like Balue. It is much more likely that Cavendish simply used a hyperbolic rewriting of Smeaton's reported last words (hardly unique in tenor), according to Constantyne: "Masters I pray you all praye for me, for I haue deserued the death."[40]

Based on the limited textual similarities evident in the *Metrical Visions*, it seems most plausible that Cavendish had access to at least a few of Skelton's works and, intentionally or not, elements of Skelton's poems are found scattered throughout the *Metrical Visions*.[41] Furthermore, the use of the Esther narrative in *Cromwell* indicates that while we may not yet be able to point to particular editions or copies of specific texts, it is certain that Cavendish was exposed to anti-Wolsey satirical material from the 1520s. That the Skelton poems that Edwards finds evidenced in the *Metrical Visions* and *Godly Queene Hester* all post-date 1522 (when Cavendish likely entered Wolsey's service) argues for at least limited contact between the gentleman-usher and these specific texts.

Moving back further in Cavendish's textual heritage, the structure of the poems marks a substantial debt to Lydgate and, through Lydgate, Boccaccio and the classics. The beginning of the pastoral vision "would have been instantly recognizable to any educated reader as an imitation of one of the most famous lines of Western literature: the opening line of the first of the ten eclogues which make up Virgil's *Bucolics*."[42] Cavendish's use of Virgil is not surprising—the *Bucolics* have long been associated with English pastoral poetry—but Cavendish's engagement with Lydgate's Fall of Princes is more exciting. Whereas Lydgate's Bochas (Boccaccio, the fourteenth-century author of *De casibus virorum illustrium*, of which Lydgate's *Fall of Princes* was a translation) reports only the stories of the majority of his subjects, all of Cavendish's speak directly to the author (and thus, to the reader as well).[43] This innovation also features in the *Mirror for Magistrates*, and thus became a core feature of Tudor *de casibus* tragedy.[44]

Despite Cavendish's innovative change in perspective, the *Metrical Visions* otherwise represent something of a *cul de sac*: there is little evidence to suggest they were circulated in manuscript in anything other than a limited

40 Edwards, notes to ll. 510–511.

41 Possibly one of Richard Kele's editions from the 1540s, as it was both recent and readily available. This is speculative, however; Cavendish could equally have held onto a manuscript copy of *Why Come Ye Nat To Courte?* from his days in service to Wolsey.

42 Pincombe, 376, 385.

43 Pincombe, 374.

44 Pincombe, 374.

fashion, and no evidence has yet been uncovered, which suggests there was any attempt to publish these poems in print. Yet this lack of subsequent influence is itself significant. Cavendish's stated purpose in producing the *Life* was, as we shall see, to defend Wolsey publicly and correct errors and polemical hyperbole. Cavendish was at least open to the possibility of publishing his poems as well (as is referenced in his envoy in the *Metrical Visions,* "Whan thou my boke / commest in to the prease"): though he had made a conscious decision to remove himself from court life, he was not a recluse and he clearly imagined a public readership for his poetry.[45] However, the *Metrical Visions* contain poems on subjects more sensitive politically than the *Life*'s defense of Wolsey, including strong condemnation of Henry's marriage to Anne Boleyn (and subsequent marriages as well). With only three extant manuscript copies of the *Metrical Visions* and no evidence of efforts to print the collection, it seems Cavendish did not pursue a wide audience for his poems. In any case, Cavendish would have been releasing these poems into an environment hostile to Wolsey, and may well have felt that the *Life* had a more clearly defined purpose than the *Visions*; furthermore, a hostile (or lackluster) reception to these verses may have limited whatever impact they might have had otherwise. The *Visions* represent an attempt to alter Wolsey's image that, for a variety of possible reasons, did not succeed. By contrast, the *Life* was partially successful, enjoying reasonably widespread circulation in manuscript; however, the pro-Wolsey material limited its appeal, and the emergence of more strident anti-Wolsey texts in the later sixteenth century demonstrate the public's embracing of a solidly negative image of the cardinal.

The Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey

Having finished most of his *Metrical Visions*—perhaps a personal project that he did not feel compelled to finish—Cavendish took a hiatus from the collection to write the *Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey.* Superficially the two texts are quite distinct: one is a poetic exercise and the other purports to be an accurate history. However, Cavendish explicitly prefaced both with an advertisement to the reader that he was writing to expose truths. He claims in the *Life* that his purpose in writing is to expose the untruths the chroniclers have published; the strength of his text and its chief selling point is that for the final years of Wolsey's life he was in a unique position to provide eyewitness

45 *Metrical Visions*, l. 2405, f. 149^{r}.

testimony. By contrast, the available material on Wolsey's life failed to impress the former gentleman-usher:

> Me Semes it Were no Wisdom to creadit every light tale, blazed by the blasphemous mowthes of rude commonalty, for we dayly here how with there blasphemous trompe they spred abrode innvmerable lyes, without ether shame or honestye (which prima facie) sheweth forth a vysage of trwthe, as thowghe it weare a perfet veritie, and matter in deed.[46]

The *Visions*, however, aim at a more abstract truth than the more straightforward correction of historical untruths: they consider how "some are by ffortune / exalted to Riches" and, led by "dame Reason," Cavendish states that "oonly God above. [/] Rewlithe thos thynges" (ll. 8, 19, 16). The *Life* and *Visions* both seek to ascertain and disseminate the truth about Wolsey, but approach truth from a historical and a poetic/moral position respectively.

We have discussed how the *Metrical Visions* often are overlooked in favor of the more well-known *Life*, but it is essential to recall that this is a relative comparison: neither text has been subjected to much sustained analysis. Despite Samuel Singer's initial 1825 edition of the *Life* and *Metrical Visions* as taken from BL Egerton 2402, interest in either text has been sporadic. In the twentieth century, Richard Sylvester and A. S. G. Edwards respectively produced editions and some analysis of the *Life* and *Metrical Visions.* More recently the *Life* was utilized heavily in an essay on early Tudor households which demonstrates admirably both the historical utility and more nebulous literary value of this early biography, and there has been some discussion of the place of the *Metrical Visions* in the canon of Tudor *de casibus* poetry.[47] A recent consideration of the *Life* as a valuable work of literature came from an unlooked-for quarter: the novelist Hilary Mantel wrote an article for *The Guardian* in 2009 in which she stated that Cavendish "leaned out of the text and touched my arm, keen to impart the story of the man whose astonishing career he saw at first-hand":

> What makes it startlingly modern is that events are conveyed through anecdote and dialogue, with turning points and dramatic highlights clicked into place; its language is direct and inventive; and the story it has

46 *Life*, 3.

47 See Colin Burrow, "The Reformation of the Household," in *Cultural Reformations*, ed. James Simpson and Brian Cummings (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 459–480. See also Mike Pincombe's essay in *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Literature*.

> to tell is fascinating, poignant and full of unexpected twists and turns. While attending on a political genius, the devoted attendant was nourishing a small writing genius within himself.[48]

Though Mantel's summary might be somewhat teleological regarding the modernity of the narrative, the sentiment she expresses is perfectly valid. It is surprising that literature scholars by and large have not recognized the skill and determined effort that produced the *Life* and the *Metrical Visions*. In addition to Cavendish's adaptation of the "fall of princes" tradition, the gentleman-usher also utilized a powerful chronological "telescoping" to condense the entirety of Wolsey's life prior to his final year into the first half of the biography.[49] The second half is concerned entirely with the cardinal's dramatic fall from power. The resulting distorted arc of Wolsey's life focuses heavily on the final year, causing the reader to experience vividly a remarkably fast rise to power and a shocking and sudden arrest and death. That this telescoping on occasion took liberties in terms of factual information was deemed appropriate by Cavendish, who seemed instead to have felt that in altering a few facts he hyperbolized Wolsey's energy and abilities, allowing the truth to be known through exaggeration: a position seemingly at odds with Cavendish's stated aim of providing an ostensibly accurate representation of Wolsey's career. That Cavendish deviates from his own acknowledged approach to history is particularly useful for demonstrating the complex relationship between history and its representations in the Tudor period.

The *Life* is eminently valuable to both historians and literary scholars, as it provides a rare window into both early Tudor court life and evolving literary mechanisms. It acts as both historical source and literary achievement, though it rarely has been acknowledged as such. Richard Sylvester's 1960 article was one of the first to address the lack of scholarly interest in the literary merits of the *Life*, "in the hope that it will stimulate interest in a work that has been, on the whole, either sadly neglected or patronizingly under-estimated by the critics of literary history."[50] Despite Sylvester's excellent article and reliable Early English Text Society edition of the *Life*, his hopes have gone broadly unfulfilled. The *Life* continues to make sporadic appearances in modern scholarship, though these are generally confined to historians' considerations of the period or of histories like those of Holinshed and Stow. Stephen Greenblatt

48 Hilary Mantel, "The Other King," *Guardian*, April 25, 2009.

49 See Sylvester's Introduction, xxxv.

50 Richard Sylvester, "Cavendish's 'Life of Wolsey': The Artistry of a Tudor Biographer," *Studies in Philology* 57, no. 1 (1960): 44.

unconsciously provides us with an example of the general attitude toward the *Life* when he discussed the construction of the cardinal's hat-as-symbol: "*The Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey*, written by Wolsey's gentleman usher, George Cavendish, is a remarkably circumstantial contemporary account of [the hat-as-symbol]."[51] Although Greenblatt raises the issue of imagistic representations of the cardinal, he does not address the resulting characterizations of Wolsey: the text itself remains circumstantial in many ways, as a useful mine for footnotes. It is certainly true that the importance of the *Life* as a historical document cannot be easily overstated: it provides a detailed firsthand account of the day-to-day workings of Henry's court, as well as eyewitness details and contemporary analysis of some of the most significant English political events from 1522 to 1530. However, it is essential that we do not overlook the fact that Cavendish felt that the story told by the *Life* was so important that he broke off from composing the *Metrical Visions* to write it. This was not because he was suddenly compelled by some teleological impulse to write a true account for the historical record, but because he felt that a competing characterization of his former master was necessary to combat the false representations then in the ascendant.

In considering the *Life*, a number of stylistic features impact significantly on Wolsey's character. One of the most obvious and effective authorial tools used to construct a positive characterization of Wolsey is the truncating of the historical timeline. By making Wolsey appear even more hard-working and efficient than he really was, Cavendish employs a touch of hyperbole: by overstating Wolsey's skills, Cavendish emphasizes those same abilities. A clear example of this can be found early in the *Life* when Wolsey was serving as royal chaplain to Henry VII. The young chaplain, having impressed the king with his diligence, was sent to conduct some diplomatic business with the Emperor Maximilian I. The following excerpt describes in meticulous detail how Wolsey completed the embassy so quickly that the king thought that Wolsey had not left yet:

> And havyng his depeche toke his leave of the kyng at Richemond abought none and so came to london with spede where than the Barge of Graveshend was redy to launche for the bothe with a prosperous tyde and wynd/ without any further abode he entred the barge and so passed forthe/ his happye spede was suche that he arryved at Gravesend within littill more than four howers/ where he taried no lenger than his post

51 Stephen Greenblatt, "Resonance and Wonder," *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 43, no. 4 (1990): 2.

> horssis ware providyd And travellyng so spedely with post horssys that he came to Dover the next mornyng erely where as the passengers ware redy vnder sayle displayed to sayle to Calice/ In to whiche passenger without any ferther aboode he entred and sayeled for the with them that he arryved at Calice within four howers and havyng there post horsis in a redynes departyd Incontynent makyng such hasty spede that he was that nyght with the Emprour/ who hauyng vnderstandyng of the Commyng of the kynges of Englondes Ambassitor wold in no wyse deferre the tyme but sent incontynent for hyme (his affeccion vnto kyng herry the seventh was suche that he reioysed whan he had an occasion to showe hyme pleasure) The ambassitor hauying opportunyte disclosed the Somme of his ambassett vnto the Emprour/ of whome he desired spedy expedycion/ the whiche was grauntyd So that the next day he was clearely dispeched with all the kynges requestes fully accomplesshed/ at whiche tyme he made no further taryaunce but with post horsis rood incontynent that nyght toward Calice agayn/ conducted thether with suche nomber of horsmen as themprour had appoynted and at the opynyng of the Gattes there where the passengers ware as redy to retourne into Englond as they ware byfore in his avauncyng in so myche that he arryved at Dover by fore ten of cloke before none/ And hauyng post horsis in a redynes came to the Court at Richemond that nyght where he takyng his rest for that tyme vntill the mornyng/ at whiche tyme after he was redy repayred to the kyng at his first commyng owt of his graces bedchamber toward his closett to here masse/[52]

The extraordinary speed with which Wolsey managed to complete his embassy is rendered even more extraordinary by Cavendish's rather liberal application of chronology and geography. However, we have no contemporary evidence that confirms this account. The circumstantial evidence that is available seems to indicate that the embassy probably did take place, but the date is unknown. It is also not clear exactly where Cavendish believed Wolsey to have gone: Cavendish may be referring to an August 1508 envoy to the bishop of Gurk, though in August 1508 Henry VII was not at Richmond and Maximilian I was in Dordrecht, which was not within a day's travel of Calais.[53] Despite the likely factual inaccuracies, this anecdote's presentation was designed to firmly impress upon the reader that Wolsey's rise to power was due to his hard-working nature and commitment to his royal masters. The language of

52 *Life*, 8–9.

53 Sylvester, 195.

this excerpt is heavily focused on words dealing with speed and time: "redy" appears four times, as does "tyme"; "redynes" appears twice; "arryved" three times, as does "spede." These are among the most frequent words used in this anecdote, which denotes a clear stylistic effort to indicate—or enhance—the rapidity with which Wolsey completed his task.

Cavendish chose to reinforce the positive light in which Wolsey's achievement ought to be seen by his readers by continuing the anecdote to explain Henry VII's reaction:

> Whome whan he sawe chekked hyme for that he was not past on hys Iourney/ Sir quod he if it may stand with your highnes pleasure I haue all redy byn with themprour And dispeched your affayers (I trust) to your graces contentacione/ And with that delyuered vnto the king themprours letters of credence/ The kyng beyng in a great confuse and wonder of his hasty spede/ with redy furnyture of all hys procedynges/ Dissymbled all his Imagynacion and wonder in that matter And demaundyd of hyme whether he encountered with his purseuaunt the whiche he sent vnto hyme (supposyng hyme not to be skantly owt of london) with letters concernyng a very necessary cause neclected in his commyssion and Instruccions/ the whiche the kyng Coueted myche to be sped/ yes forsothe sir/ quod he/ I encornterd hyme yester day by the way/ And hauyng vnderstandyng by your graces letters of your pleasure therin/ haue notwithstandyng byn so bold vppon myn owen discression (perceyveyng that matter to be very necessarye in that behalf) to dispeche the same/ And for as myche as I haue excedyd your graces commyssion I most humbly requyer your gracious remyssion and pardon/ The kyng Reioysyng inwardly not a littill sayd agayn/ we do not oonly pardon you therof by also geve you our pryncely thankes bothe for the procedyng therin and also for your good spedy exployt/[54]

This anecdote can be understood as a trope for Cavendish's construction of Wolsey as a whole. Cavendish's Wolsey had only one heroic flaw: he was unable to stop himself from overreaching, albeit in the service of his master. As this embassy to Maximilian I demonstrated, Wolsey was exceptionally efficient and determined to prove his quality to Henry VII and, in time, to Henry VIII. He did so with "hasty spede," as Cavendish describes his embassy to the emperor (being promoted from royal chaplain at the end of Henry VII's reign to chancellor and cardinal less than six years later), though this rapid ascension through the

54 *Life*, 9.

temporal and spiritual ranks was made even more spectacular by Cavendish's "telescoping" of chronology. By f. 12^{v}, Wolsey has been born, educated, worked for various aristocrats, joined the royal household of Henry VII (and subsequently Henry VIII), and progressively made royal chaplain, dean of Lincoln, royal almoner, bishop-elect of Tournai, bishop of Lincoln, archbishop of York, cardinal, and Lord Chancellor. Cavendish is quick to point out that Wolsey's first three bishoprics (Tournai, Lincoln, and York) were granted so "that he had three bysshoprykes in oon yere gevyn hyme."[55] Cavendish thus compresses the first (approximately) forty-two years of Wolsey's life into two dozen pages. The chronological manipulation does not end there. Anne Boleyn's entrance into the *Life* comes soon after her arrival at court in 1522, firmly in the second half of Wolsey's career. Yet of the 238 pages in the *Life*, Anne first features on page 58, leaving 177 to cover approximately the final eight years of Wolsey's life. Wolsey's ascent to power was surprising—even unprecedented—but Cavendish's superficial recitation of the overwhelming majority of Wolsey's life and the early part of his career forces a sense of speed and urgency upon the reader.

The truncation of the majority of Wolsey's life and career would proportionately necessitate a similar abridgement of the remainder of the cardinal's life, particularly as many of Wolsey's main diplomatic accomplishments took place in this "telescoped" section. Yet Cavendish reversed his previous policy and instead expanded enormously on the final years of Wolsey's life. The gentleman-usher provides a staggering amount of detail about Wolsey's day-to-day life both at court and away. The result of this detail is that the reader is given highly personal access to the falling cardinal. While ostensibly Cavendish hoped to foster sympathy with that access, this focus is likely for two practical reasons. First, Wolsey's fall was dramatic because of its completeness and rapidity. As quickly as he accrued power, that process took years: by contrast, in the space of a year Wolsey lost the Lord Chancellorship, was cast in a writ of *praemunire*, and was being taken to the Tower for treason when he died. Cavendish's firsthand account of the cardinal's spectacular fall is the main selling point of the *Life.* The second reason is practical, rather than stylistic. Cavendish's personal experiences in the cardinal's service begin only in 1522, so naturally Cavendish was reliant on other sources for earlier information (chiefly Hall, and probably Wolsey himself as well). It is logical that Cavendish would possess more detail about the later period of Wolsey's career and, in particular, that he would emphasize the details that no one had published previously.

55 *Life*, 15.

One of the key features of this heightened intimacy is the detailed descriptions of the public displays of Wolsey's wealth: expensive clothing, elaborate processions, and expansive building projects. In particular, Cavendish seemed to have enjoyed displaying his mercer heritage by detailing Wolsey's enormous collection of costly fabrics. One of the earliest examples of Cavendish's attention to fabrics is brief, but central to the evolving sixteenth-century construction of Wolsey. When Wolsey was appointed cardinal, Pope Leo X sent him the traditional cardinal's *galero* along with written confirmations of Wolsey's new status and authority:

> Yet by the way of Commyncycacion/ ye shall vnderstand that the Pope sent this hatt as a worthy Ioyell of his honor, dygnytie, and auctorytie the whiche was conveyed hether in a verlettes bugett[56]/ who semyd to all men to be but a person of small estymacion/ Wherof yorke [Wolsey] beyng aduertised of the bassnes of the messanger and of the peoples oppynyon and rumor/ thought it for his honour/ mete/ that so highe a Ioyell shold not be conveyed by so symple a messenger/ Wherfore he caused hyme to be stayed by the way Immedyatly after his arryvall in Englond/ where he was newely furnysshed in all maner of apparell with all kynd of costly sylkes whiche semyd decent for suche a highe ambassitor/ And that don he was encountred vppon blakhethe And there receyved with a great assemble of prelattes and lusty gallaunt gentilmen/ And from thence conducted and conveyed thoroughe london with great tryhumphe/ Than was great and spedy provision and preparacion made in Westminster Abbey for the confirmacion of his highe dignytie/ the whiche was executed by all the bisshopes and Abbottes nyghe or abought london in riche myters And Coopes and other costly ornamentes/ whiche was don in so solompne a wyse as I haue note seen the lyke oonless it had byn at the coronacion of a myghti prynce or kyng///[57]

This anecdote serves to illustrate Cavendish's attention to detail, particularly in regards to displays of wealth. In addition, it is worth noting how Cavendish ended this particular excerpt: "whiche was don in so solompne a wyse as I haue note seen the lyke oonless it had byn at the coronacion of a myghti prynce or kyng///."[58] Because Cavendish was not yet in Wolsey's service, it is not entirely clear how he had observed this event. Little is known about Cavendish's early

56 *OED*, "varlet" and "buget": a low-born servant's bag.

57 *Life*, 16.

58 *Life*, 16.

life and career, but it is far from certain that he actually attended this event. Nevertheless, he wrote this anecdote as if he had seen it himself; in doing so, he allowed this personal interpretation to lend a veneer of authenticity and authority to the narrative. Perhaps inadvertently he also inspired later writers to adapt this same anecdote to great effect. This story notably appears in both Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles* (both 1577 and 1587 editions) and John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* (1570, 1576, 1583 editions only), but was adapted by both authors to suit their purposes, as is demonstrated in chapters 3 and 4. Foxe provided a version rich with circumstantial and suppositional detail, designed for an anti-Roman polemical purpose:

> Not much vnlyke to this, was the receiuyng of the Cardinalles hatte, which when a ruffian had brought vnto him to Westminster, vnder his cloke, he clothed the messenger in riche araye, and sent him backe agayne to Douer, appointyng the Bishop of Canterbury to mete him, and then an other company of Lordes and gentlemen, I wote not howe often, before it came to Westminster, where it was set vppon a cupbourde, and tapers round about it, so that the greatest Duke in the land must make curtesie therunto, and to his emptie seate, he being away.[59]

Holinshed's version is also critical of Wolsey, but instead keeps the details few and the anecdote brief, underscoring the author's intended moral lesson (namely, that hubris was Wolsey's downfall and ought to be avoided):

> In the end of Nouember, the Cardinals hat was sent into Englande, which the Gentlemen of Kent receyued, and brought to London, wyth such tryumph as though the greatest Prince in Europe had bene come to visit the king. And on a Sunday in Saint Peters Church at Westminster he receyued the habite, Hat, piller, and other such tokens of a Cardinal. And now that he was thus a perfite Cardinall he looked aboue all estates, whiche purchased him great hatred and disdaine on all sides.[60]

By contrast, Cavendish's version was clearly written from a perspective more favorable to the cardinal. Cavendish did not attempt to hide Wolsey's efforts to improve his own image, but instead billed Wolsey's efforts as in keeping with the expected dignity of his offices.

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59 Foxe, 1570 ed., 1163.

60 Holinshed, 1577 ed., 1497–1498.

FIGURE 2 *"Wolsey's journey to London on his way to France," artist unknown. Taken from Bodleian MS. Douce 363, George Cavendish's* Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey. *1578, f. 58r. Reproduced with the kind permission of the Bodleian Library and the University of Oxford.*

Cavendish's focus on Wolsey's material riches is such that any reader (and thus any subsequent author using the *Life* as a source) would necessarily come away from the text with an overwhelming picture of wealth. As Wolsey's gentleman-usher, Cavendish would have had an awareness of Wolsey's estate which was likely unrivalled; by doing so, Cavendish both aggrandized his former master and showed his own lofty place in the Henrician court (or, perhaps more appropriately, in Wolsey's court). Despite declaring that it "passithe my Capasitie" to describe Wolsey's possessions, Cavendish made a game attempt: he devotes ninety-seven lines to describing the significant members of Wolsey's household, the total number of which Cavendish gave as "abought the Somme of fyve hundred parsons."[61] Having covered Wolsey's servants, Cavendish goes on to describe in similar depth the displays of wealth to be found on his person and in his house, as well as Wolsey's diplomatic achievements. He also described a typical day for Wolsey during term time, even detailing the different fabrics he wore and the nosegay he carried:

61 *Life*, 19, 21.

> And after masse he wold retourne in his privye chameber agayn and beyng aduertised of the furnyture of his chambers without with noble men and gentilmen/ with other persons wold issue owt in to theme apparelled all in red in the habytt of a Cardynall whiche was other of fynne skarlett or elles of crymmosyn Satten/ Taffeta Dammaske/ or Caffa/ the best that he could gett for mony/ and vppon hys hed a round pyllion with a nekke of blake velvett set to the same in the Inner side/ he had also a tippett of fynne Sables a bought his nekke/ holdyng in his hand a very fayer Orrynge wherof the mete or substaunce with in was taken owt and fylled vppe agayn with the part of a Sponge wherin was vyneger and other confeccions agaynst the pestylente Ayers to the whiche he most commenly smelt vnto/ passyng among the prease or elles whan he was pesterd with many Sewters/[62]

The purpose of these lengthy descriptions is three-fold. First, by including a wealth of detail, which only someone who was close with the cardinal would know, Cavendish provides a strong impression of intimacy with Wolsey; Cavendish wished to convey the message that clearly he had in fact worked closely with Wolsey, or else he would not have been able to provide such rich details. This point would presumably have made the *Life* more appealing to a courtly (or at least a comparatively wealthy) audience, which could recognize the veracity of Cavendish's detail. Second, and by contrast, the display of wealth would have allowed even a comparatively low-born audience to experience vicariously the lifestyle of the most powerful man in the Henrician court after Henry himself: the extreme detail allows the reader a distinct picture of Wolsey's term-time progressions, even down to the color and type of fabric on the inside of Wolsey's hat. Finally, it permits Cavendish to make his key argument: Wolsey was not overproud; he was simply a cardinal like any other. Cavendish made so much of Wolsey's wealth not to demonstrate the cardinal's greed, but to show that the wealth and power that Wolsey displayed was essential for diplomatic purposes and was fitting for a cardinal. This attitude is made plain in anecdotes like the following, wherein Wolsey was sent to discuss diplomatic matters with the new Emperor, Charles V:

> And for dyuers vrgent causys touchyng the kynges majestie yt was thought good that in so waytie a matter/ And to so noble a prince [Charles V] that the Cardynall was most meate to be sent on so worthy and Ambassett/ wherfore he beyng redy to take vppon hyme the charge therof/ was ffurnysshed in all degrees and purposys most lykest A great

62 *Life*, 23.

> prynce whiche was myche to the highe honour of the kynges majestie and of this realme/ ffor first in his procedyng *he was furnysshed lyke a Cardynall of highe estimacion havyng all thyng therto correspondent and agreable*/ his gentilmen beyng in nomber very many clothed in lyuere Coottes of Crymmosyn velvett of the most purest Colour that myght be Invented/ with chaynnes of gold abought ther nekkes/ And all his yomen And other mean officers ware in Cottes of ffyne Skarlett garded with blake velvett an hand brode/.[63]

Cavendish continues on to state that partially as a result of Wolsey's princely demeanor (and the power demonstrated through the elaborate matching livery of his entourage), the duly impressed new emperor footed the bill for Wolsey's entire embassy. Wolsey's displays of power were therefore understood—by Cavendish, at least—to demonstrate Henry VIII's own princely demeanor, since all that Wolsey had derived directly from his monarch. Furthermore, as the italicized portion highlights, Cavendish saw Wolsey as conducting himself in a manner "correspondent and agreeable" with his rank. By contrast, Foxe provides an alleged example of how Wolsey manipulated his own image and that of his fellow cardinals to create an impressive public spectacle:

> The Cardinall of Yorke, sent to the Legate at Callis, read clothe to clothe his seruauntes withall, whiche at their commyng to Callis, were but meanly appareled. When al thinges were ready, Campeggio passed the seas and landed at Douer, and so kept forth his iourney towarde London, at euery good towne as they passed, he was receaued with procession, accompanied with all the Lordes and Gentlemen of Kent. And when he came to blacke heath, there met hym the Duke of Norfolke, with a great nomber of Prelates, Knightes & Gentlemen, all rychely appareled, and in the waye he was brought into a rich tent of cloth of golde, where he shifted hym selfe into a Cardinalles robe furred with ermines and so toke his mule riding toward London. Now marke the worthy example of ambition in a Cardinall. This Campeggio had viii. mules of his owne, laden with diuers farthelles and other preparation. The Cardinall of Yorke, thynkyng them not sufficient for his estate, the nyght before he came to London, sent hym xii. mules more with empty cofers couered with red, to furnishe his cariage with all. The next daye, these. xx. mules were lead through the citie, as though they had bene laden with treasures, apparaile and other necessaries, to the great admiration of al men, that they

63 *Life*, 21–22; emphasis added.

> shoulde receiue a Legate as it were a God, with such and so great treasure and ryches.[64]

Though modern readers must bear in mind that Foxe and Cavendish were writing from very different positions, it is clear from the accounts written by both authors that Wolsey believed that a proper cardinal must look the part in order to maintain the dignity of the Church, not simply the individual. The resulting (and enduring) image of Wolsey was, then, of a man deeply concerned with image, for good or ill.

As in the example above, there are numerous instances in the *Life* where Cavendish presents a different consideration of an anecdote recited in Foxe or Holinshed. Perhaps one of the clearest examples of this is Wolsey's death scene. In Foxe Wolsey's death is laden memorably with ominous portents that are meant to guide the reader to a negative understanding of Wolsey. By contrast, in the *Life* Wolsey's death is a peaceful affair, with the cardinal's lengthy deathbed speech providing an extended commentary on public events for the king's benefit. Cavendish's Wolsey makes a 'good death' appropriate to a Tudor grandee: he appears largely repentant of his secular lifestyle, as indicated by one of the most enduring Wolsey quotations: "But if I had serued god as dyligently as I haue don the kyng he wold not haue gevyn me ouer in my gray heares/."[65] The Tudor distinction between religious clergy (normally monastics) and more secular clergy (generally bishops and other administrative figures) is one unfamiliar to modern Christians, but was not unusual in Henrician England. Nevertheless, we are given other indications of Wolsey's religious feeling; despite his obvious and serious illness, he refused food when he realized it was a fast day:

> After he had eaten of a Colas made of a chykken a sponefull or too/ At the last quod he/ wherof was this Colas made/ forsothe sir/ quod I/ of a Chikkyn/ wye/ quod he/ it is fasting day and saynt Androwes Eve/ what thoughe sir quod Doctor Palmes/ ye be excused by reason of your syknes/ yea/ quod he/ what thoughe I wyll eate no more/[66]

This comparatively ascetic action stands in stark contrast to the painstakingly detailed accounts of the rich food and symbols of enormous wealth in which Wolsey normally indulged. Wolsey's refusal seems uncharacteristic, but

64 Foxe, 1563 ed., 470.

65 *Life*, 178–179.

66 *Life*, 178.

Cavendish also writes that after his death, it was discovered that the cardinal had been secretly wearing a hair shirt:

> The body was taken owt of the bed where he lay deade/ who had vppon hyme next his body a shirt of heare besydes his other shirt whiche was of very fynne lynnyn holond clothe/ this shirt of heare was onknowen to all hys seruauntes beyong contynually attendyng vppon hyme in his bedd chamber except to his chapleyn whiche was his gostly father/[67]

Wolsey's apparently secret asceticism undercuts the substantial previous descriptions of worldly wealth and provides a poignant counterpoint to his reputation for ostentatious wealth (though it is not clear how long Wolsey had adopted this practice before his death). Cavendish's implication seems clear that Wolsey's efforts to cultivate a grand self-image were not a result of personal pride, as his detractors alleged. Instead, Cavendish attempts to demonstrate that Wolsey's grand image was meant to maintain the glory of the king and Church he represented. Wolsey himself suffered under his finery for his own soul's benefit: that the cardinal kept this a secret during his lifetime made the revelation of his asceticism far more powerful than if he had advertised his use of a hair shirt.

The cumulative effect of the *Life* is far from obsequiously complimentary, though Cavendish himself specified that he intended the *Life* to act as a defense of his former master. As we have seen, Cavendish's Wolsey is focused on processions and displays of his tremendous wealth. In this respect, this characterization confirms many details of more generally negative representations of the cardinal, and even Foxe does not specify Wolsey's immense wealth to the degree that Cavendish does. The conclusion Cavendish draws from this is difficult to argue against:

> Here is thend and ffall of pryde and Arrogauncye of such men exalted by ffortune to honour and highe dygnytes/ ffor I assure you in hys tyme of auctoryte and glory/ he was the haultest man in all his procedynges that than lyved/ hauyng more respect to the worldly honor of hys person/ than he had to his sperytuall profession/ wherein shold be all mekenes, hymylitie, and charitie/ the processe wherof I leave to theme that be learned and seen in the dyvyn lawes///[68]

67 *Life*, 182.

68 *Life,* 182.

The general assumption about Cavendish's motivations has been that he was writing to defend his former master. To an extent, this is true: Cavendish says so himself in the beginning of the *Life*. It may have been that Wolsey, ever the canny public relations-minded prelate, recognized the need for a campaign to promote a positive self-image (even a posthumous one) and helped provide Cavendish with anecdotes about his early life: indeed, it seems likely that Wolsey did so, as the details about his life in Oxford cannot be confirmed by any extant material. As the early Protestant chroniclers utilized particular images of the cardinal to enhance their anti-Roman propaganda, so too did Wolsey work with Cavendish to propagandize himself (though Cavendish did not in fact write the *Life* until several decades later). The majority of the *Life* is concerned with Wolsey's final years, when Cavendish had personal insight into the events being recounted. The second half of the *Life* focuses entirely on the events of 1529–1530. Cavendish joined Wolsey's service only sometime between 1520 to 1522: by that point, Wolsey had already been Lord Chancellor and legate *a latere* for years. By virtue of necessity Cavendish could not rely exclusively on his own experiences; he needed to find sources for information on the majority of Wolsey's life. In order to fill in the earlier years of Wolsey's career, Cavendish relied on the cardinal himself.[69] As many scholars have noted, the earlier portions of the *Life* contain a significant number of historical errors likely to have come from Wolsey himself.[70] It is understandable that Wolsey would not recall events decades past with perfect accuracy (nor was Cavendish likely to remember without omission or distortion the events that Wolsey had told him about twenty years before he wrote the *Life*); however, it is equally probable that Wolsey took this opportunity to promote a particularly favorable self-image. In either case, it is important to contextualize Cavendish's source material, particularly that which came from the cardinal during the final months of his life as he fought desperately to regain his lost royal favor.

The argument has recently been put forward that Cavendish was not motivated purely (or even primarily) by defending his old employer: an argument that would cast Wolsey not as maligned man, but as a prophetic divine. This argument contends that Cavendish was writing in response to the conservative rebellions that flared in the spring and summer of 1549 in the West Country, East Anglia, and across the south. These rebellions sprang up in response to the

69 Sylvester, xxix.

70 As Sylvester rightly notes, we do not know exactly what Cavendish and Wolsey spoke about, and speculation on specifics "force[s] an editor of the *Life* into conjecture" (xxix). Nevertheless, it is generally acknowledged that Wolsey was the primary source for the *Life*.

Act of Uniformity passed by Parliament in 1549, which compelled the English Church to adopt the authorized Reformed prayer book. With his proximity to one of the epicenters of the rebellions—Lavenham—Cavendish perceived this civil unrest as indicative that the Protectorate's encouragement of evangelism was both unpopular and immoral.[71] Perhaps in response to this encouragement, Cavendish included Wolsey's "prophecy of destruction." The prophecy is related in the final pages of the *Life*, where Wolsey is speaking to Sir William Kingston, the constable of the Tower and the cardinal's escort to London:

> And sey furthermore that I requyer his grace (in goddes name) that he haue a vigilent eye/ to depresse this newe peruers sekte of the lutarnaunce that it do not encrease within his domynyons thoroughe hys necligence/ in suche a sort as that he shalbe fayne at lengthe to put harnoys vppon hys bake to subdewe them[.][72]

This prophecy is particularly interesting because it demonstrates a clear attempt by Wolsey to manage a legacy. By this point (November 1530), Wolsey was desperately ill at Leicester Abbey and convinced he would die there. He therefore requested that Kingston report his final words back to Henry VIII ("wherfor I pray you with all my hart to haue me most humbly commendyd vnto his Royall majestie") and gave a lengthy speech—his final words—in which he urged the king to repress the evangelicals (Lutherans) and other rebellious factions.[73] With his last words, Wolsey urges Henry VIII to control more strictly "onlawfull Assembles of the comen pepolle" a policy the historical Wolsey himself was not particularly keen on promoting during his career; perhaps this is Cavendish's reflections on Wolsey's own policy oversights.[74]

It is not obvious why Wolsey would use his final moments of life to urge a crackdown on religious dissent when he could easily have done so during his lengthy ecclesiastic career. The answer appears to be two-fold. Wolsey knew he was dying and may well have indulged in his love for spectacle with a few platitudes while genuinely repenting for his far-from-uncommon secularism. Second, and more prosaically, we have to bear in mind that Cavendish was writing these words a quarter of a century after they were allegedly uttered; the likelihood that in 1530 Wolsey said exactly what Cavendish published in 1554 is small. It seems more likely that while Wolsey may have said something similar in tone, Cavendish used this opportunity to inject some pro-Catholic sentiment

71 Pincombe, 385.

72 *Life*, 178.

73 *Life*, 179. For the entire speech, see 178–181.

74 *Life*, 180.

in the wake of the 1549 rebellions in southern England and the West Country, which peaked with Kett's Rebellion in Norfolk.[75] The theory that Cavendish was shaken out of his rural seclusion by his shock at the apparent realization of Wolsey's prophecy therefore seems reasonable, provided we understand that Cavendish almost certainly reworked Wolsey's half-remembered words so as to have them be more explicitly prophetic about the then-current political situation.

In addition to Wolsey's warning about the Lutherans, there is another prophecy in the *Life* that is significant for understanding Cavendish's approach to interpreting source material to make it prophetic in relation to contemporary events. This prophecy is related midway through the *Life*, where Wolsey notices Cavendish admiring an entailed cow on a garden wall:

> I sawe there a Dwn Cowe/ wheron I mused most by cause it semed me to be the most lyvelyest creature entaylled among all the rest/ My lord beyng (as I sayd) walkyng on the other side/ of the Garden/ perseyved me/ came sodenly apon me at my bake onwares sayd what haue ye espied here that ye so attentyfely looke vppo/ fforsothe if it please your grace/ quod I/ here I do behold these entaylled Images . . . among them all I haue most considered the Dwn Cowe/ the which as it semyth me/ the worke man hathe most apertly shewed hys Connyng/ yea marye sir/ quod my lord/ vppon thys dwn Cowe dependyth a certyn prophesy . . . that whan this Cowe ridyth the bull/ than prest beware thy skull/[76]

Cavendish goes on to explain that the symbols in the prophecy suggest that the dun cow represents Henry VIII, as the dun cow was his heraldic symbol pertaining to his earldom of Richmond, and the bull represents Anne Boleyn (the bull being part of her father's heraldic device). He states that the prophecy was popularly known and believed to have been fulfilled when Henry and Anne married, as "Than was thys prophecy thought of all men to be ffulfilled//ffor what a nomber of prestes bothe religious and seculer lost ther heddes for offendyng of suche lawes as was than made to bryng this prophecye to effect."[77] Cavendish is somewhat oversimplifying the realization of the prophecy, since he does not mention Henry's assumption of supremacy over the English Church (largely the reason for the "lost heads"). And, of course, Wolsey himself did not lose his head, though execution for treason was a

75 For more information on the 1549 rebellions, see Thomas Betteridge, *Literature and Politics in the English Reformation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 87–129.

76 *Life*, 127–128.

77 *Life*, 128.

significant possibility had he not died first. Instead, Cavendish hints at a conspiracy within the government—or, at least, an effort made by members of the government—to fulfill this prophecy by enacting laws to persecute churchmen. This is pertinent to the chronology of the *Life*, referencing the persecution of conservative churchmen during Edward VI's reign (though not the Marian persecutions contemporaneous with the composition of the *Life*).

These two prophecies both bear evidence that Cavendish's purpose in writing was not limited to defending Wolsey against the mid-century chroniclers. The prophecies both share features that indicate Cavendish relied on them to prove his point: they both predict religious strife resulting from secular misrule, and they both have to be explained by Cavendish, as they do not describe explicitly the contemporary situation. Instead, Cavendish has to tweak his interpretation of these prophecies in order to make them fit. The Dun Cow prophecy is only realized decades after Henry and Anne's marriage (though clearly the Reformation in England owed much to this union), and does not particularly fit Wolsey, who did not lose his head at all. Wolsey's prophetic final words describe the horrors Henry will face from the Lutherans and other heretical groups, but Cavendish was writing during the reign of a staunchly conservative monarch, several years after widespread conservative—not evangelical—rebellions. The appropriateness of Cavendish's interpretations may not be wholly convincing, but they do reveal that the author was himself convinced.

In addition to considering Cavendish's motivations in writing his texts, we also must consider his sources. Cavendish himself states that much of the material came from Wolsey, particularly in sections pertaining to Wolsey's early life. A clear example of this can be found early in the *Life*, where Cavendish is describing Wolsey's childhood and education:

> And beyng but a child was very Apte to learnyng/ by means wherof his parentes or his good ffrendes and maysters conveyed hyme to the vnyuersitie of Oxford/ where he prospered so in learnyng that (As he told me his owen person) he was called the (boye) bacheler for as myche as he was made bacheler of art at fifteen yeres of age/ which was a rare thyng And seldome seen/[78]

Further evidence is easily spotted throughout the *Life* simply by realizing that many of the anecdotes that Cavendish relates could only have been told to him by Wolsey. One of the first examples is when Cavendish describes how Wolsey took revenge on a country knight who had placed the future cardinal in the

78 *Life*, 5.

stocks. Having been given his first benefice by the marquess of Dorset, Wolsey apparently managed to offend Sir Amias Paulet (Elizabethan writers suggested by fornication or drunkenness) to such an extent that Paulet ordered Wolsey to be placed in the Limington stocks:[79]

> Oon sir Amys Pawlett knyght dwelling in that Contrie there Abought toke an occasion of displeasure Ayenst hyme/ Vppon what ground I knowe not/ But sir by your leave he was so bold to sett the Scole Master by the feete duryng hys pleasure/ The which was afterward neither forgotten ne forgevyn ffor whan the Scole Master mountyd the dignytie to be Chauncelour of Englond he was not oblivyous of the old displeasure mynystred vnto hyme by Master Pawlett/ but sent for hyme And after many sharpe and heynous wordes enioyned hyme to attend vppon the Councell vntill he ware by them dismyssed/ And not to departe without licence vppon an vrgent payn and forfiture/ So that he contynued within the Middell temple the space of five or six yeres or more/ whos logyng there was in the Gathowsse next the strett/ the whiche he reedefied very sumptiously garnysshyng the same on the owtsyde therof with Cardynalles hattes and Armez bagges And Cognysaunces of the Cardynalles with dyuers other devisis in so gloryous a sort that he thought therby to appese his old onkynd displeasure/[80]

Cavendish's portrayal of Wolsey is hardly obsequious or rose-tinted. This anecdote establishes an early depiction of Wolsey that most sixteenth-century authors would have admitted was reasonably accurate: it is a picture of a man with a sensitivity to perceived insults and liable to bear grudges. As Thomas Campion would later write in Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles*, even his supporters recognized his proud nature:

> I thinke (sayth [Campion]) some Princes basterd no Butchers sonne, exceeding wise, faire spoken, high minded, full of reuenge, vicious of his body, loftie to his enimies, were they neuer so bigge, to those that accepted and sought his friendship wonderfull courteous[.][81]

What makes this anecdote about Sir Amias Paulet so particularly interesting is that we know about this incident only because of Cavendish. There are no other known accounts of Wolsey being put in the stocks (for any reason). If the

79 Thomas Grey, first marquess of Dorset (c. 1455–1501), who employed Wolsey as a tutor to his sons; Gwyn, 2.

80 *Life*, 5–6.

81 Holinshed, 1577 ed., 1555.

event had actually taken place, it seems strange that Wolsey's mid- and late sixteenth-century detractors would not have used it as an example of Wolsey's pride. Certainly Foxe never missed an opportunity to use Wolsey's bad behavior (real or imagined) as ammunition against the papacy.[82] But Hall fails to mention this story, and neither Foxe nor Holinshed came across it. Bearing in mind that Cavendish used Wolsey as his main source for information on the cardinal's early life, the source for this anecdote seems to have been Wolsey himself. By including this anecdote, Cavendish (and by extension, Wolsey) revealed that he was trying to construct a two-part image of the cardinal. To hide or deny Wolsey's pride would have been counterproductive and futile, as Wolsey's investment in his own image (through his person, offices, and real estate) would have nullified any claims in that direction. Instead, Cavendish portrayed a Wolsey who was generous, hard-working, and proud of the role he played in English government, but equally would not suffer any insult to himself or his offices.

In keeping with his self-professed purpose in writing the *Life* (and the *Metrical Visions*), Cavendish also had a didactic purpose in including this anecdote about Wolsey's vengeance on Sir Amias Paulet:

> Nowe may thys be a good example And precedent to men in Auctoritie/ (whiche woll sometyme worke ther wyll without wytt) to remember in ther Auctoritie/ how Auctortye may dekaye/ And whome they punysshe of wyll more than of Iustice may after be Advaunced in the publyke wele to highe dignytes And gouernance/ And they based as lowe/ who wyll than seke the means to be revenged of old wronges susteyned wrongfully byfore . . . Therfore I wold wysshe All men in Auctorytie and dignytie to knowe and feare god in all ther doynges that Auctorytes be not permanent but may slide And vanyssh as prynces pleasures do Alter and chaynge/[83]

Wolsey himself would have done well to take this advice while he was in authority. Doubtlessly Cavendish would have argued that the difference between Paulet and Wolsey lay in the exercise of wit; to Cavendish, Paulet had punished Wolsey out of willfulness, not a sense of justice. By contrast (according to Cavendish), Wolsey punished men for what he considered to be offences against his offices or against England. This anecdote provides an opportunity for us to see how Cavendish twisted what was a negative story about Wolsey—one entirely in keeping with Wolsey's reputation for nursing grudges—and attempted to use it to portray Wolsey as unrelenting in his pursuit of justice.

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82 See chapter 3.

83 *Life*, 6.

After considering Cavendish's *Life* and *Metrical Visions*, it seems clear that there is a strong argument to be made for Cavendish's texts to be given greater attention by early modern historians and literary scholars. Cavendish provides modern scholars with the opportunity to understand better not only the day-to-day realities of life within Wolsey's household, but also how mid-Tudor biographical practices were evolving; how a moderate religious conservative reacted to Marian and Edwardian religious and political reforms; and how an amateur poet constructed multilayered images and characterizations of Wolsey and other key Tudor political figures. Furthermore, Cavendish's texts provide a convincing mid-century stepping stone for connecting particular images and themes associated with Wolsey (extravagant clothing, personal attention to image, proud and determined nature) from the early part of the sixteenth century through to the end.

Yet we ought to be careful when attempting to ascertain what impact Cavendish's *Life* and *Metrical Visions* had either on the public image of Wolsey or on the Wolsey-related literature of the period. It has been argued that by the 1550s "a consistent body of anti-Wolsey literature had built up, a corpus which Cavendish countered to such great effect that he single-handedly confounded the image of Wolsey as a convenient all-purpose villain."[84] This may have been Cavendish's intention for the *Life*, but it overestimates the impact of the text. The *Life* appears to have circulated reasonably widely throughout the reigns of Mary and Elizabeth, though most extant copies in the British Library date from the seventeenth century.[85] Though it is clear from these extant manuscript copies that the *Life* circulated in manuscript form, it is overly speculative to claim that Cavendish succeeded in confounding the villainous image of the cardinal; certainly Wolsey's presence of the *Acts and Monuments* and Holinshed's *Chronicles* attest to this lack of success. The *Life* did not appear in print until 1641, thus negating any wider impact the *Life* might have had in the Tudor period. The *Metrical Visions* have left a smaller manuscript record, with two manuscript editions surviving in addition to the autograph Egerton manuscript: BL Dugdale 28 and BL Additional 14410. The *Visions* were not printed in the early modern period and so their influence was limited in this respect. There is a possibility that the *Mirror for Magistrates* owes something of its style to the *Metrical Visions*; due to the paucity of surviving evidence, it is difficult to make a claim for a direct connection with any degree of certainty.[86] Thomas Churchyard's Wolsey-poem in the *Mirror for Magistrates* shares many characteristics with the *Metrical Visions*,

84 Stella Fletcher, *Cardinal Wolsey: A Life in Renaissance Europe* (London: Continuum, 2009), 173.

85 See BL Egerton 2402, BL ADD4233, BL ADD48066, and BL Sloane 848.

86 Edwards's Introduction to *Metrical Visions*, 12.

though the confessional and chronological gulf between Churchyard and Cavendish is wide enough to admit a range of differences that make a direct heritage difficult to prove.[87] This issue is further muddied when we consider that it is not at all clear when many of the poems contained in the extant 1559 edition of the *Mirror* were composed (or the 1587 edition, for that matter). While it is perhaps tempting to speculate that Cavendish and the *Mirror* poets were all writing in a style currently *en vogue* (and perhaps circulating manuscripts between themselves), that hypothesis seems highly unlikely given Cavendish's purposeful isolation in Suffolk in addition to the religious and political differences between these various poets.

Nevertheless, we can confirm that the *Visions* (and indeed, the *Life* as well) are highly significant. These two texts testify to the strong presence—even dominance—of anti-Wolsey images in mid-Tudor literature, and provide a counterpoint to those images from an authoritative, firsthand perspective. Furthermore, these texts demonstrate how mid-Tudor writers (and, one assumes, readers) took the *de casibus* narrative structure and used that same topos in a variety of genres with direct application to contemporary (or nearly contemporary) events. These mid-century texts attest to the overwhelmingly negative imagery of the cardinal dominant throughout the early and mid-Tudor periods, and show how Cavendish attempted to counteract these negative images with an appeal to truth. Born out of dissatisfaction with the "lyes" of chroniclers like Hall and poets like Skelton, these texts are nevertheless inextricably intertwined with their oppositional precedents; Cavendish drew on them as *aides-mémoires* as well as absorbing poetic influences.[88] Cavendish's variety of characterizations of the cardinal (as lamenting sinner, proud prince of Rome, as prophetic antievangelical, as bureaucrat par excellence) demonstrate a wide range of authorial practices and polemical approaches to recovering the lost reputation of his former master, as well as speaking the truth about the cardinal's final days, however subjective that truth might have subsequently appeared. Though it is difficult to ascertain exactly what the impact of the *Life* and *Metrical Visions* might have been during the Tudor period, the mere existence and survival of such texts (through Cavendish's authorial efforts as well as the anonymous transmission of manuscripts) indicate that Wolsey was not wholly conceived of as the villain posterity has assumed him to be.

87 See Anna Swärdh, "From Hell: *A Mirror for Magistrates* and the Late Elizabethan Female Complaint," in *Narrative Developments from Chaucer to Defoe*, ed. Gerd Bayer and Ebbe Klitgard. New York: Routledge, 2011), 150.

88 Sylvester, xxxi.

CHAPTER 3

"The history of a certaine ridiculous spectacle": Literary Representations of Cardinal Wolsey in John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*

The first four English editions of martyrologist John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* provide an array of anecdotes about and images of Cardinal Thomas Wolsey. Interlaced with authorial condemnation, these episodes were designed to create a particular negative impression (or series of impressions) of the cardinal. Even the most cursory reading reveals Foxe's intentions; indeed, not only does Foxe editorialize in the body of the text itself, but he often provides marginalia that make his opinions perfectly clear. The *Acts and Monuments* is an excellent historical source offering rich and personal detail about the Reformation, and it also has a strong fictive element: a highly significant feature of the *Acts and Monuments* that still is not fully understood.

This fictive aspect is difficult to unpick, and has been understudied in no small part because of a lack of consensus about how we understand Foxe's role in relation to the development of the text itself. Foxe is often described as a compiler or editor of the *Acts and Monuments*: these terms encompass the process by which Foxe assembled and incorporated a wide range of previously written or published material to produce the text. While these terms are adequate (if still problematic) for describing the creators of the more tightly event-focused texts that typified medieval civic chronicles, for example, they are misleading when applied to Foxe. They are problematic because they gloss over not just the effect of the editorial choices Foxe made when selecting and editing material, but more important, they ignore the impact of Foxe's original interpolations and marginal comments on Elizabethan—and later—understandings of the events and personalities that appear in the text.[1] These features provide strong authorial guidance to the reader, and are crucial to understanding how Foxe conceptualized the past, how he utilized the fruits of his research, how he crafted particular narratives within the text, and what impact those features had on readers and subsequent authors. Foxe's fictive impulse is shown to advantage if we examine how Foxe's Wolsey character changed over

1 Thomas S. Freeman, "Research, Rumour and Propaganda: Anne Boleyn in Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs,'" *Historical Journal* 38, no. 4 (1995): 799.

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the first four editions of the *Acts and Monuments*, and how those characterizations adopted and adapted previous representations of the cardinal.

So far we have seen a number of representations of Wolsey designed to cast the cardinal in a particular light (either positive or negative). These characterizations were all based on the man himself: they were designed to either demolish or recover his reputation as a historical figure. Foxe, by contrast, marks the first author in this study who was not contemporary with Wolsey: born about 1516/17 and dying in 1587, Foxe was not particularly interested in ruining or rescuing the posthumous reputation of a man from a previous age. Instead, Foxe found in Wolsey an opportunity to advance his evangelical polemical writings, using the cardinal as a vehicle to transmit negative imagery of the Roman Church. Foxe explicitly states that he uses Wolsey and his alleged sins as a metonym for the Roman Church as a whole:

> I thought compendiouslye to expresse the ridiculous and pompous qualities, and demaner of thys foresayd Thomas Wolsey, Cardinall and Legate of Rome, in whom alone, the image and life of all other such like followers and professors of the same church, may be seene and obserued.[2]

Foxe presents an image of Wolsey as an overproud and clownish hypocrite, far more concerned with increasing his (and the Roman Church's) temporal wealth and power than appropriately reforming the Church. In weighting his Wolsey anecdotes with such obviously moralistic judgments, Foxe transforms Wolsey from a historical figure—capable of both good and evil—into a vehicle for transmitting Foxe's confessional position. Though Foxe does take other figures as either positive or negative exemplars of the evangelical or conservative confessional groupings, Wolsey is unique in that Foxe juxtaposes him through constant repetition and explicit explanatory statements (both in-text and marginal) with the reformers who were just beginning to agitate for any number of religious reforms, whether based on Luther's teachings or on any of the subsequent key figures of the Protestant Reformation.

The first four English editions of the *Acts and Monuments*, published in 1563, 1570, 1576, and 1583, were produced by Foxe himself in conjunction with his printer, John Day.[3] What makes these four editions particularly valuable is that not only do they differ considerably in content, but that Foxe was responsible for those editorial decisions. In these four editions, then, modern scholars are

2 Foxe, 1570 ed., 1159.

3 John King, introduction to *John Foxe and His World*, ed. Christopher Highley and John N. King (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2002), 1.

given an opportunity to see how a leading Protestant martyrologist and propagandist manipulated his text in response to social and political changes. Though the evolution of these anti-Wolsey anecdotes shows a concerted effort by Foxe to select stories and images that present opinions geared against Wolsey and his policies (and, more broadly, the Roman Church), the editing of these anecdotes demonstrates Foxe's keen awareness of the social climate into which his text was being released.[4] The resulting characterizations of Wolsey from this textual manipulation were a key element of Foxe's propagandist purpose. Of course, editorial manipulation skews any representation of a historical figure; however, Foxe's clear intention to use his Wolsey character as anti-conservative propaganda provides a valuable case-study for examining early English evangelical rhetoric and characterization techniques. This book therefore considers selected characterizations of Cardinal Wolsey in the *Acts and Monuments* and how they metamorphosed over the first four English editions.

When exploring the *Acts and Monuments*, even the most casual readers will note that there is a great deal of repetition.[5] The anecdotes about Wolsey are no exception in this respect; Foxe often reiterates certain points or arguments, often without any reference to the previous mentions of that same anecdote. As a result of this repetition as well as the sheer volume of material, this research has had to be fairly exclusive in terms of selecting textual examples. The selected episodes present a characterization of Cardinal Wolsey and do not merely mention his name or record a neutral action. There are numerous mentions of Wolsey in passing that do not contribute substantially to either a specific or overall image of the cardinal; while doubtlessly valuable in many respects, these instances have been set aside in the interests of relevancy. This chapter focuses exclusively on episodes or anecdotes that contain explicit characterizations or images of Wolsey. These episodes have been selected because they exemplify a range of editorial mechanisms that Foxe employed to form a cohesive public image of the cardinal: they show how Foxe incorporated material from other authors; how he connected classical and Biblical narratives to Wolsey; how he used marginal comments to clarify and emphasize particular points or conclusions for the reader; how he employed direct speech, written accounts, rumor, and popular stories to craft an image of the cardinal. In addition, the episodes appearing in this study have been selected to show how Foxe manipulated or preserved particular textual elements throughout the four editions as part of an ongoing editorial process to increase the impact

4 Patrick Collinson, "John Foxe and National Consciousness," in Highley and King, *John Foxe and His World*, 12.

5 Freeman, "Research, Rumour and Propaganda," 806–807.

of his Wolsey images. In many cases, Foxe's anecdotes were taken whole or in part from previous authors (most notably from Hall); examples have also been selected to demonstrate how Foxe consciously changed or wholly absorbed previous materials to craft his images of Wolsey.

The First Four English Editions: A Brief Overview

The first four English editions of the *Acts and Monuments* feature distinct differences in several significant aspects of their content and layout, influenced by and intended to influence the religious and political concerns of the age. The 1563 edition—the first vernacular edition of the *Acts and Monuments*—was born out of *Commentarii rerum in ecclesia gestarum* (1554) and *Rerum in ecclesia gestarum* (1559), which were Latin martyrologies largely concerned with post-Wycliffe English Reformists.[6] Drawing on a substantially expanded number of sources and including a history of the Church since 1000, the 1563 *Acts and Monuments* represented a much more ambitious undertaking than either *Commentarii* or *Rerum*. Much of the expansion was due to Foxe's increased incorporation of elements from works by other authors (like Bale and Flacius), but Foxe also began to use archival records and firsthand accounts. In particular, Foxe began to exploit the London episcopal records, beginning with the Marian persecutions and working backwards in time.[7] However, Foxe was pressured by Day to publish the *Acts and Monuments* as quickly as possible; as a result, Foxe was unable to include as much material on the early reign of Henry VIII (in particular, material from before 1530).

Day's push to publish the 1563 *Acts and Monuments* explains in part why there are comparatively few anecdotes about Wolsey in this edition as compared to the later editions: in the 1563 edition there are twenty-one anecdotes or episodes featuring Wolsey, whereas the 1570 edition has forty-three, the 1576 edition has thirty-nine, and the 1583 has forty-seven. However, the argument that the 1563 edition contains fewer pre-1530 accounts is not strictly reflected in this tabulation of the Wolsey episodes: of the twenty-one episodes in the 1563 edition, sixteen occur after 1525 (leaving only four dating before 1525 and a single nonchronological editorial passage).[8] The 1570 edition maintains a similar pattern (indeed, there is an even higher number of post-1525 episodes):

6 Thomas S. Freeman, "John Foxe: A Biography," in John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*.

7 Freeman, "John Foxe: A Biography."

8 The year 1525 is, admittedly, something of an arbitrary date: it is utilized here to demonstrate that the overwhelming amount of Foxe's anecdotes about Wolsey concern the cardinal's fall

thirty-four out of forty-four total episodes occur after 1525, leaving six pre-1525 episodes and four editorial commentaries. The 1576 and 1583 editions follow the same pattern as the 1570 edition, albeit with minor variations and repetitions.

What these numbers indicate is that Foxe apparently did not use the London episcopal registers (which would have provided a wealth of material on Wolsey before his fall from power) or conduct his own interviews for his material on Wolsey. Of course, this is an understandable approach in part; certainly there was a limited group of people alive who would have been in a position to observe Wolsey in life and still have been able to be interviewed by Foxe (and Foxe himself was about thirteen or fourteen when Wolsey died and was still living in Lincolnshire in any event). Instead, it seems much more likely that Foxe relied almost completely on accounts previously compiled by writers like Bale and Hall; an examination of Foxe's marginal citations appears to reflect this editorial approach: nearly all of the citations related to Wolsey throughout the editions (three in 1563, ten in 1570, six in 1576, and nine in 1583) reference Hall's *Chronicle*. Indeed, several of the most powerful anecdotes about Wolsey were taken directly from Hall and either paraphrased or reproduced almost verbatim, with the stories about the 1517 arrival of Campeggio in England, Wolsey's residence in Richmond Manor, and Katherine's insults against Wolsey chief among them. Regardless, it seems clear that Foxe simply did not have a chance to include all the Wolsey anecdotes in the 1563 edition and so made an effort to reorganize and expand in the subsequent editions. In addition, this approach makes clear that Foxe was almost exclusively focused on the later part of Wolsey's career, as it provided more relevant grist to Foxe's polemical mill. Despite Foxe's apparently hurried approach to the 1563 edition, it is clear that the first edition of the *Acts and Monuments* was produced by an author and editor who was deeply concerned about reader reception beyond immediate commercial success or failure, and quickly identified perceived shortcomings with that edition for subsequent revision.

The 1563 edition was released into a nation far from uniform in its social, political, and religious identity. Elizabeth had only recently gained the throne after the death of her conservative sister Mary I and it was far from clear which side (if any) England would take in the Reformation. Elizabeth herself, though ostensibly a Protestant, attended Mass in the Chapel Royal and did not immediately clarify her position on the royal supremacy.[9] Elizabeth has been characterized as "a moderate, if secular-minded, reformer who rejected 'popery'

from power and role in the divorce, rather than Wolsey's rise to power and career preceding the divorce (which is, of course, almost all of it).

9 *ODNB*, "Elizabeth I."

but kept the crucifix and candles on the altar of the Chapel Royal."[10] More recently, scholars have argued that Elizabeth was indeed committed to evangelical reform, but her religious policies were hampered by the necessity of maintaining a positive (or at least neutral) relationship with Philip II of Spain.[11] This religious uncertainty, combined with the political complications caused by Elizabeth's unwillingness to marry, fueled fears of a return to religious persecutions like that of Mary's reign, or the resumption of dynastic civil war.

Foxe's primary concern was the religious question. For him and his fellow Marian exiles, Elizabeth's rule represented a ray of hope for both a more generalized religious gain and a more individual chance to return to England and live and worship safely while promoting their evangelical teachings. The 1559 Parliament must have both encouraged Foxe and his colleagues while it simultaneously reminded them of the precariousness of their situation; it passed bills that in effect enforced a return to Edwardian Protestantism, but only after a first act regarding royal supremacy was scuppered by conservatives in the House of Lords.[12] Parliament reconvened and was able to push through new Acts of Uniformity and Supremacy, which essentially were attempts to soothe religious tensions by attempting to placate as many of the fragmented Reformist sects as possible without explicitly declaring Catholicism heretical.[13] They were largely successful, though the Act of Supremacy was passed only after several revisions, and the Act of Uniformity passed due in part to the absence of several key conservatives in the House of Lords.[14] Most significantly, the Acts were passed without the support of a single churchman; the bishops were all leftover appointees from Mary's reign, and represented a significant barrier to Reformist politics. Despite the Reformist victory in Parliament, the bishops (along with the conservative temporal peers in the House of Lords) still wielded considerable power. Foxe—only recently returned from his exile in the Low Countries—would certainly have been cognizant of the precariousness of the evangelical position.

Over the next few years the overall tensions changed little, though the situation had developed dramatically. The death of Henry II of France meant that the French throne was now occupied by the short-lived Francis II, who was

10 John Guy, *Tudor England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 252.

11 David J. B. Trim, "Seeking a Protestant Alliance and Liberty of Conscience on the Continent, 1558–1585," *Tudor England and Its Neighbors*, ed. Susan Doran and Glenn Richardson (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 145.

12 Guy, 261.

13 Guy, 262.

14 Guy, 262.

married to Mary, Queen of Scots. French machinations in Scotland led to a major Reformist rebellion led in part by John Knox. The Scottish rebels knew, however, that they could not hope to defeat the French army sent by Francis and Mary. The rebels therefore applied to England for assistance. Though this would seem like an ideal situation for a nominally Reformist English government, Elizabeth was not pleased. Elizabeth was deeply opposed to John Knox's brand of Protestantism as well as his personal politics; the publication of Knox's *First Blast of the Trumpet* in 1558—loaded with invective against female rule meant for Mary I and Mary of Guise—contrived to anger Elizabeth and negate any efforts Knox had made in the interests of an Anglo-Scottish Reformation.[15]

Elizabeth's unwillingness to embrace the Scottish rebellion but her decision to intervene in the 1562 iteration of the French Wars of Religion served only to reinforce the editorial difficulties facing Foxe.[16] In the run up to publishing the *Acts and Monuments* and the 1563 Parliament (which subsequently passed the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, further solidifying English Protestantism) Foxe and Day would have felt pressure to be circumspect about how they promoted their particular propagandist narrative. If they appeared to be pushing radical evangelism, they would find it difficult to avoid governmental censure. Equally importantly, if they were too mild on reform and anti-conservative propaganda, their influence on the precarious religious situation in England would be negligible.

As a result of these competing political pressures, the 1563 edition tends to present Wolsey's activities as farces illustrative of both his personal sinfulness and the broader evils of the Roman Church. There is a strong element of humor; certainly it is telling that the first anecdote about the cardinal in the 1563 edition tells how Wolsey and his legatine counterpart Campeggio were embarrassed by a comical (and, for Foxe, metaphorically appropriate) accident. Whether or not the incident actually took place is both not known and rhetorically irrelevant: Foxe's gleefully pointed tone makes clear that he was attempting to guide his readers to understand the clownish nature of these Popish prelates.

The *Acts and Monuments* by and large is not a particularly humorous text, however, and although all four editions (to a greater or lesser extent) do portray Wolsey as a foolish character, there is a distinct change in tone in the later

15 Guy, 265.

16 At least, to openly embrace the rebellion. She initially allowed only surreptitious military aid (consisting of money and arms) to be given to the rebels, though in March 1560 she authorized naval blockades of Scotland and sent an army to assist her ships. This eventually led to the signing of a peace treaty with France in July of the same year.

three editions. The transition from the 1563 treatment of the Wolsey stories as satire-minded humor to the 1570 adoption of a much more serious and condemnatory tone is particularly marked. As the text below shows, Foxe alters the titling, marginalia, and the body of the text to adjust the image of Wolsey as a comic character to that of Wolsey as a dangerous representative of a sinful Roman Church. This sharp change in tone has a clear antecedent; the political upheaval of 1568–1570 brought into focus the very real danger of the collapse of Elizabeth's Protestant reign and the placing of a Catholic monarch on the throne of England.[17] The widespread 1569 Northern Rising (led by the earls of Northumberland and Westmorland) and the subsequent Dacre rebellion was a stark reminder that Elizabeth's throne and English Protestantism was far from stable. The Northern Rising was touched off by the collapse of a plan to marry the Mary, queen of Scots to Thomas Howard (nominally Protestant, but allegedly at least semi-Catholic).[18] Though the marriage plan initially enjoyed some support from within the Privy Council, Elizabeth dismissed the idea and summoned its proponents to court. Though most of the organizers emerged relatively unscathed, the earls of Northumberland and Westmorland (Thomas Percy and Charles Neville respectively) refused to obey Elizabeth's summonses and rose up in rebellion.

Though the rebellions were crushed, the concerns of English Protestants were far from allayed. In early 1570 Pope Pius V published a papal bull titled *Regnans in excelsis* excommunicating Elizabeth and her supporters. This bull provoked fears that the Spanish would seize the opportunity to amass an army and assist a Catholic rebellion led by Mary from Scotland.[19] To make matters worse, the Ridolfi assassination plot of 1570/71 was unraveling (though it would not be discovered by the Elizabethan government until 1571), implicating Mary, Norfolk, Pius V, and the Spanish in a vast conspiracy to assassinate Elizabeth. The Spanish were a constant worry for English Reformists: a tension heightened by the occasional revelation that the Spanish and English governments—far from rushing toward war—were desperate to avoid conflict and therefore were willing to make accommodations that English Reformists found unsettling.[20] Philip II had protected Elizabeth from the French and from papal excommunication until as late as 1570. However, the Ridolfi Plot and subsequent English privateer raids on Spanish shipping interests cooled relations (though the 1574

17 King, 115.

18 Guy, 272–273.

19 Guy, 277.

20 Pauline Croft, "'The State of the World Is Marvellously Changed': England, Spain and Europe 1558–1604," in Doran and Richardson, *Tudor England and Its Neighbors*, 178–202.

Treaty of Bristol would later go some way to reconciling the two governments).[21] The resulting tensions must have raised the hopes of Protestant reformers that further separation from the Catholic powers of Europe was in the offing. In addition, English conservatives were producing powerful propaganda of their own; as Richard Williams has demonstrated, the anti-Catholic bills of the 1560s and resulting persecutions pushed many English Catholics from moderate protest into full-blown resistance.[22] To veterans of the transition from Edwardian Protestantism to the Marian persecutions, the events of 1569–1570 must have made it seem as though the odds of a Protestant England surviving to the end of the century were, if not slim, at least rather nerve-rackingly long.

For Protestant reformers like Foxe, the prospect of a successful Catholic rebellion and a subsequent return to the Marian persecutions would have been terrifying in the extreme. The 1570 edition of the *Acts and Monuments* expresses that fear by means of a far more combative editorial and authorial tone. The 1569 rebellions and the constant concerns about assassination plots (both foreign and domestic) as well as the increasing levels of resistance propaganda led Foxe to revise the *Acts and Monuments* to combat more actively the heightened Catholic threat. In addition, Foxe used the 1570 edition to further encourage Elizabeth herself—the dedicatee of the work—to effect greater religious reforms; concerned with the progress of reformation, Foxe manipulated his text to reflect that dissatisfaction.[23]

The changes made to the 1570 edition clearly demonstrate that Foxe and Day not only realized the tremendous impact of the 1563 edition, but that the 1570 edition represented an opportunity to compound that impact on the highest levels of English government.[24] With the advantage of having a powerful patron and significant support in the Privy Council—in the form of William Cecil—the 1570 edition was going to be a success. Foxe's and Day's supposition was correct; the 1570 edition was embraced by the government and distributed broadly throughout England, as it was "very profitable to bringing her majesty's subjects into good opinion, understanding and dear liking of the present government."[25] This directive made the *Acts and Monuments* one of

21 Croft, 185–186.

22 Richard Williams "'Libels and payntinges': Elizabethan Catholics and the International Campaign of Visual Propaganda," in Highley and King, *John Foxe and His World*, 198–215.

23 King, 116.

24 Glyn Parry, "Elect Church or Elect Nation? The Reception of the *Acts and Monuments*," in *John Foxe: An Historical Perspective*, ed. David Loades (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 172.

25 King, 112–113. Quoted text from York, Borthwick Institute, Institution Act Book 2, part 3, fol. 85^{v}; as quoted in Evenden and Freeman, "John Foxe," 30.

the most important and (nominally) accessible books in England. This mandate supporting the efforts of Foxe and Day encouraged the men to proceed to a third edition, which appeared in 1576.

The 1576 and 1583 editions were composed in a similar key to the 1570 edition; the solidifying of Elizabeth's reign in response to external pressures (both political and religious) and the concurrent identification of Elizabethan Protestantism with loyal Englishness encouraged Foxe to continue with a stern approach to propaganda. Day, for his part, nominally retired from the project in favor of his son, Richard Day. However, the elder Day maintained a considerable degree of editorial control over the 1576 edition, and between them, the father and son condensed the 1570 text considerably. King cites Lander to confirm that "the 1576 version of the *Book of Martyrs* is the product of a concerted effort to produce a more affordable book."[26] Despite the 1576 edition being printed on cheaper paper and having undergone extensive abridgment, it does contain considerable paratextual developments: the inclusion of tables of referenced Biblical texts and a redesign of the index being the most significant.[27]

Like the previous two editions, the 1576 edition was not produced purely out of a commercial motive, though certainly the Days' efforts to produce a cheaper edition reflects a clear attempt to increase readership (and thus increase profits). There were several major events which would doubtlessly have reinforced Foxe's belief in the need for a reenergized *Acts and Monuments.* First, the 1571 Parliament did not permit revision of the Prayer Book, an action (or lack of action) that angered more radical evangelicals. Second, and more worrying to reformers like Foxe, Elizabeth forbad the 1572 Parliament to consider religious reform at all. Third, in 1572 the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre (wherein as many as 30,000 French Huguenots were killed by conservative mobs throughout France) sparked a renewal in the French Wars of Religion and a subsequent solidifying of anti-Catholic opinion in England. Finally, Elizabeth's personal ratification of the reconciliatory Anglo-Spanish Treaty of Bristol in 1574 and the significant public support for that rapprochement would have renewed concerns about the progress (or lack thereof) of religious reform in England.[28] These particular events, along with the Elizabethan government's efforts in the second half of the decade to create a pan-European Protestant alliance made clear that there was still a need (at least, a perceived need) for further

26 King, 124. See also Jesse Lander, "Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*: Printing and Popularizing the *Acts and Monuments*," in *Religion and Culture in Renaissance England,* ed. Claire McEachern and Deborah Shuger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 69–92.

27 King, 126.

28 Croft, 186.

pro-reform propaganda. Indeed, with a lower price point, the 1576 edition may well have been intended for broader private ownership: a heretofore limited market for the *Acts and Monuments* by reason of its considerable cost to produce (and its correspondingly high price tag).

Whatever the reasons for producing an abridged and lower-quality edition, they apparently were not terribly convincing. The 1583 edition returned to the 1570 pattern; instead of abridging the text, as he had done for the 1576 edition, Foxe expanded: he added some 300,000 additional words beyond the 3.5 million words in the 1570 edition.[29] However, not all the passages cut from the 1570 edition reappeared in the 1583 edition, nor did most of Richard Day's paratextual additions. It is not wholly clear why Foxe did not restore all the cut passages, nor is it obvious why John Day did not include most of his son's helpful paratextual additions. What did emerge was a text that began to embrace a much more apocalyptic vision of England and English Protestantism.[30] This apocalyptic tone was due, in part, to setbacks to religious reformation. One of the key blows to radical English Protestantism was the 1577 dismissal of the Reformist archbishop of Canterbury, Edmund Grindal.[31]

Not only did the Reformists lose a valuable mouthpiece and patron in Grindal, but there was an even greater blow yet to come. In late 1583, John Whitgift was installed as archbishop of Canterbury. Whitgift was staunchly conservative and opposed to nonconformity; this appointment upset Foxe, who responded with an apocalyptic warning against relaxation of reform to the reader toward the end of the 1583 edition: "Be you washed, and make your selues cleane &c. and not to presume to farre vppon their [Catholics] owne securitie, nor thinke themselues the further of from Gods hand, because mans hand forbeareth them."[32]

The final 1583 edition for which Foxe was personally responsible became in many regards the definitive edition for successive generations. It formed the basis for all the early modern post-Foxe editions published between 1589 and 1684. The first four editions of the *Acts and Monuments* thus were created and continually adapted in reaction to domestic and international events, both political and religious. The images of Wolsey, as a vehicle for anti-Catholic sentiment similarly metamorphosed over time, as did the means by which Foxe created those images. Over the four editions, Foxe continually revised the

29 King, 129.

30 See Parry, 167–181.

31 King, 131.

32 Foxe, 1583 ed., 2138.

anecdotes and episodes featuring Wolsey as part of the broader adjustments made to the individual editions.

A Ridiculous Spectacle

Having considered the historical backdrop and organizing principles behind the *Acts and Monuments*, let us apply these features directly to analysis of the Wolsey anecdotes found in the text. One of the primary examples of Foxe's propagation of anti-Wolsey characterizations appears in all four English editions of the *Acts and Monuments*; indeed, it is the first anecdote about Wolsey in the 1563 edition, and forms the first part of the sections devoted to Wolsey in the later three editions. Foxe relates how Wolsey was responsible for a "ridiculous spectacle" in 1517 for the arrival of Cardinal Campeggio, sent by Pope Leo X as legate *a latere* to convince Henry VIII to join the other European monarchs on a crusade against the Turks. As Foxe relates the story, Wolsey, having been informed of Campeggio's arrival in Calais, immediately sent a delegation of "Byshops and Doctors, with as much speede as he could, to meete the Legate."[33] He did so in order to demand that before Campeggio would be allowed to enter England the pope must appoint Wolsey legate *a latere* as well; he argued that a perceived lack of authority or papal trust would undermine his position as chief churchman in England. Foxe informs his readers that:

> Campeggio being a man light of beliefe, and suspecting no such matter, gaue credite vnto hys wordes, & sent vnto Rome with such speede, that within xxx. dayes after, the Bull was brought to Callis, wherin they were both equally ioyned in commission.[34]

Having established himself as equal to Campeggio (and in doing so having risen to the highest degree of power in the Church below the pope himself), Wolsey then set about crafting a public spectacle worthy of the personal envoy of the pope. He ordered various courtiers to ride to Dover: indeed, Foxe tells his readers that "all the Lordes and Gentlemen of Kent" followed Campeggio from Dover to Blackheath, where "there mette hym the Duke of Northfolke, with a great number of Prelates, Knightes, and Gentlemen, all richlye apparelled."[35] Obviously cognizant of the value of such a display of power and

33 Foxe, 1570 ed., 1159.

34 Foxe, 1570 ed., 1159.

35 Foxe, 1570 ed., 1160.

wealth, Campeggio was provided with a tent made of cloth-of-gold in which he changed into a cardinal's robe decorated with ermine fur. He then remounted his mule (ostensibly a symbol of Christ-like humility, the efficacy of which was perhaps diminished somewhat by the procession of the ermine-wearing cardinal) to continue on to London. Wolsey, upon learning that Campeggio had only eight mules to carry his belongings, sent another twelve mules laden with bags filled with garbage, to make Campeggio's entry into London seem more spectacular:

> The Cardinall of Yorke, thinkyng them not sufficient for hys estate, the nyght before he came to London, sent him xij. mules more, with emptie cofers couered with red, to furnishe hys cariage withall. The next day, these xx. mules were lead through the Citie, as though they had bene loden with treasures, apparell and other necessaryes, to the great admiration of all men, that they should receiue a Legate as it were a God, with such & so great treasure, & riches.[36]

By displaying such an abundance of wealth (albeit an illusory abundance), the cardinals attempted to provide an overwhelming projection of power. Foxe certainly knew the value of such a display; he explicitly tells his readers how this was evidence of "Ambition and pompe in the Cardinall," as well as Wolsey and Campeggio's conscious manipulation of their public images: "For so the common people doth alwayes iudge & esteeme, the maiestie of the clergie, by no other thyng then by theyr outward shewes & pompe."[37] However, as Foxe gleefully explains to his readers, disaster struck the procession with hilarious (and morally appropriate) results:

> but in the middest of thys great admiration, there happened a ridiculous spectacle, to the great derision of theyr pride & ambition. For as the Mules passed through Cheapeside, and the people were pressing about them, to beholde and gase (as the maner is) it happened that one of the Mules breaking his coller that he was led in, ran vpon the other Mules, wherby it happened, that they so running together, & theyr girthes being losed, ouerthrewe diuers of theyr burthens, and so there appeared the Cardinalls gaye treasure, not without great laughter and scorne of many, & specially of boyes and gerles, wherof some gathered vp pieces of meate, other some, pieces of bread and rosted egges, some found horse shoes,

36 Foxe, 1570 ed., 1160.

37 Foxe, 1570 ed., 1160.

> and olde bootes, with such other baggage: crying out, beholde, here is my Lord Cardinalls treasure. The Muliters being therwithall greatly ashamed, gathered together theyr treasure agayne as well as they could, and went forward.[38]

In this episode, Foxe makes clear that this farcical event was not merely a comic scene of the pompous brought low. Instead, he explains to his readers that this ridiculous show of pride and arrogance (which he believes is typical of the Roman clergy) is an exemplum. Indeed, the richly decorated scarlet bags stuffed with garbage act as a metaphor for the clergymen themselves: grandly draped in the scarlet of princes of the Church, the cardinals are puffed full of sin. Foxe notes in the margin that thus we can see "How God dispointeth pride & pompe in men."[39]

Of course, it is difficult to be certain this event actually occurred: unsurprisingly, Cavendish makes no mention of it; if the event had actually occurred, it seems unlikely that Cavendish would have wanted to repeat such an embarrassing story. Perhaps more tellingly, no references exist in diplomatic correspondence; it is certain that such an event would not have gone unnoticed. Hall is cited by Foxe as the source of the anecdote, and indeed, the 1548 edition of Hall's *Chronicle* provides a similar account of the same event:[40]

> The night before he came to London, the Cardinall of Yorke, to furnishe the carriages of the Cardinall Campeggio, sent to hym twelue mulettes with emptie Cofers couered with redde, whiche twelue Mulettes wer led through London, emongest the Mulettes of Campeggio, whiche were but eight and so these.xx. Mulettes passed through the stretes, as though thei had been full of treasures, apparell, and other necessaries. And when thei came into Chepe, one of the Mulettes brake from her keper, and ouerthrewe the Chestes, and ouerturned twoo or three other Mulettes cariages, whiche fell with suche a violence, that diuerse of theim vnlocked, and out of some fell olde Hosen, broken Shoen, and roasted Fleshe, peces of Breade, Egges and muche vile baggage: at whiche sight the Boyes cryed,

38 Foxe, 1570 ed., 1160.

39 Foxe, 1563 ed., 470. In the later three editions, the comment reads, "How God confoundeth the pride and pompe of men." (1570 ed., 1160; 1576 ed., 984; 1583 ed., 1010).

40 In the 1563 edition Foxe simply states that the story is "Ex Parclipomena" (470), but in the three later editions he clarifies the citation as having come from Hall: "Ex Edouar. Hallo." (1570 ed., 1160; 1576 ed., 984; 1583 ed., 1010).

> see, see my Lorde Legates threasure, and so the Muleters wer ashamed, and tooke vp all their stuffe & passed furth.[41]

Hall does not provide information about his source for the story. The story is essentially the same as in the *Acts and Monuments*: there are only small editorial differences ("Lorde Legate" instead of "Lord Cardinall," and "ouerturned twoo or three other Mulettes cariages" instead of "ran vpon the other Mules"). For both Hall and Foxe the absolute historical accuracy of the story is irrelevant; instead, the construction and dissemination of negative images of the cardinals generated by the anecdote are of primary importance, as Foxe explains in the introduction to this episode:

> we haue thought good, because the nomber of the yeares doth also serue, to anexe here in this place a mery spectacle or iest which happened in London, no lesse to be noted, as also to be laughed at, for that thereby the detestable pompe and ambition of the Cardinalles was detected and shewed.[42]

In this excerpt from the 1563 introduction to this anecdote, we can clearly see Foxe's intentions: the story is included (and constructed) because it does provide a clearly negative image of the cardinals, and Wolsey in particular. It would seem to be for this reason that Foxe includes this anecdote as the first major episode about Wolsey in all four English editions of the *Acts and Monuments*: a simple, comic ("mery"), and eminently memorable scene, it reveals both the foolishness and the sinful pride of Wolsey.

Foxe's efforts to imbue these anecdotes with moralistic judgments is apparent; however, we can further confirm that he was not interested in portraying an accurate and objective characterization of Cardinal Wolsey by examining contemporary accounts of the same events. It is essential to remember that Foxe's interpretations of these events are explicit attempts to belittle Wolsey; as a result, they may never have occurred (or may not have occurred as Foxe relates). Cavendish relates the same 1516 mission of Campeggio—sent by Pope Leo X to encourage Henry VIII to join the other European monarchs on a crusade against the Turks—in his *Life*:

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41 Edward Hall, *The Vnion of the Two Noble and Illustre Famelies of Lancastre* [*and*] *Yorke* . . . (London: Richard Grafton, 1548), 441. Accessed via Early English Books Online.

42 Foxe, 1563 ed., 469.

> Long was the desier & greatter was the hoppe/ on all sides expectyng the Commyng of the lagacion & Commyssion frome Rome yet at lengthe yt came/ And after the arryvall of the legat Campasious (with thys solompne commyssion) in England/ he beyng sore vexed with the gowtte was constrayned by force therof to make a long Iorney or euer he came to london/ who shold haue byn most solompnly receyved at Blak hethe/ And so with great tryhumphe conveyed to london but his glory was suche/ that he wold in no wyse be entertayned with any suche pompe or vaynglory/ who suddenly came by water in a wyry to his owen howsse . . . which was furnysshed for hyme with all maner of Stuffe & Implementes of my lordes provysion[.][43]

Cavendish was no less biased than Foxe (indeed, his explicitly stated goal was to defend the cardinal), which may have influenced his reporting of this (non-) event. Instead of blaming Wolsey for forcing Campeggio to wait in Calais for a papal bull making Wolsey equal to Campeggio, Cavendish blames the delay on Campeggio's gout. The embarrassing story of the mules which Foxe relates is not mentioned. Cavendish's account of the procession to London is markedly different from the elaborate reception Foxe relates in the *Acts and Monuments* as being full of pomp and vanity. Instead, Cavendish explains that Campeggio was too humble to accept any show of "vaynglory" and so came quickly to the residence provided for him by Wolsey without any fanfare.

As has been observed, both Cavendish and Foxe were explicitly defending their respective causes and therefore manipulated source material to enhance their own texts. Though this manipulation perhaps creates difficulties in discovering what actually took place, it does clarify how both these men consciously manipulated their language to convince their readers. Cavendish used exhaustive detail to denote legitimacy, whereas Foxe preferred to provide explicit authorial guidance to the reader. In Foxe's preface to this story, he uses a classical parallel to make even clearer how his readers should understand both the anecdote and the reason for the moralizing of the events recounted thereafter:

> For lyke as the Lacedemonians in times past, were accustomed to shewe and demonstrate dronken men vnto their children, to beholde and looke vpon, that through the foulnes of that vice, they might inflame them the more to the studie and desire of sobrietie: euen so it shall not be hurtfull sometimes to set forth the examples which are not honest, that others

43 *Life*, 77.

> might therby gather the instructions of better and more vnright liuing. Wherfore thou shalt note here (good reader) in thys historie, with all iudgement, the great difference of life and Christian conuersation, betwene thys church, and the other true humble Martyrs and seruantes of God, whom they haue, and doe yet persecute.[44]

Just as the Lacedemonians made a humiliating spectacle of the flawed members of their society with a pedagogic intent, Foxe purports to highlight the "ridiculous" qualities of the Roman Church in order to demonstrate the necessity for ecclesiastic reform. The severe and ostensibly morally upright Protestants—connected with the near-mythical Lacedemonians in Foxe's narrative—provide a clear contrast to the ostentatious sinfulness of Wolsey (and by extension, the entire Roman Church).

Foxe's motivations regarding the propagation of a negative public image of Wolsey are revealed not only by his explicit condemnations in the text itself, but also in the alterations made by Foxe throughout his four editions. In the 1563 edition, Foxe introduces the previous anecdote about Campeggio's arrival in England and the humiliation of the mule incident with the following explanatory title: "The history of a certaine ridiculous spectacle of the Cardinalles pompe, at London in the yeare of our Lorde 1517."[45] Though it is a rather precise summary of the anecdote—and provides the first clue as to how Foxe wants the story to be interpreted—the title gives no indication of how the anecdote fits within the larger framework of the 1563 *Acts and Monuments*. Indeed, in that edition the story is separated thematically from the surrounding text; the anecdote is preceded by a description of the death of Martin Luther and is followed by a list of Protestants forced to abjure in the reign of Henry VIII). In the later editions, the same story appears at the beginning of a much more substantial section with a broader focus on the evils of Cardinal Wolsey, which the title reflects:

> A briefe discourse concerning the storye and lyfe of Thomas Wolsey, late Cardinall of Yorke, by way of digression, wherin is to be seene and noted, the expresse image of the proud vainglorious church of Rome, how farre it differeth from the true church of Christ Iesus.[46]

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44 Foxe, 1570 ed., 1159.

45 Foxe, 1563 ed., 469.

46 Foxe, 1570 ed., 1159.

Instead of merely referring to the arrival of Campeggio and the upsetting of the mules' bags as a "ridiculous spectacle" that exemplified Wolsey's pompousness, the titling of the section in the later three editions ties in this anecdote with several others: by clumping negative images of Wolsey together, the reader is presented with a more memorable, cohesive, and powerful sense of the cardinal (as Foxe represents him). In addition to a more structured approach, Foxe also includes more editorial commentary in the later three editions. In the 1563 edition, Foxe introduces this story by offering it as a short comic respite from the weighty historical matters that form the bulk of the text:

> ALbeit that it is not greatly pertinente vnto thys hystory, nor gretly requisit in these so waighty matters, to intreaet much of Thomas Wolsey Cardinall of York, notwithstanding it semeth good not to passe ouer this one thing, that through the variety of matter, the tediousnes of the history may be taken away, as also that the thynge it self may be profitable, for example.[47]

The anecdote, as Foxe says, is offered both as an allegory and as an entertaining aside. Though the example Foxe wishes to make of Wolsey and his vices is important, Foxe indicates that this is but one "profitable" example in the myriad events demonstrating the corrupt nature of the Roman Church. However, in the seven intervening years between the 1563 and the 1570 edition, Foxe's purpose has hardened. He pursues the same goal as in the 1563 edition—that is, to illustrate to his readers the sinfulness of Wolsey and the Roman Church—but does so in a more detailed, urgent, and explicitly didactic manner:

> ALthough it be not greatly pertinent vnto thys our historye, nor greatly requisite in these so waightie matters, entreating of Christes holy Martyrs, to discourse much of Thomas Wolsey Cardinall of Yorke: notwithstanding, forsomuch as there be many whiche being caried away with a wronge opinion, and estimation of that false glittering church of Rome, doe thinke that holines to be in it, which in deede is not: to the entent therfore that the vaine pompe & pride of that ambitious church, so farre differing from all pure Christianitie, and godlines, more notoriouslye may appeare to all men, and partlye also to refreshe the reader with some varietie of matter, I thought compendiouslye to expresse the ridiculous and pompous qualities, and demaner of thys foresayd Thomas Wolsey. . . . Wherfore thou shalt note here (good reader) in thys historie,

47 Foxe, 1563 ed., 469.

> with all iudgement, the great difference of life and Christian conuersation, betwene thys church, and the other true humble Martyrs and seruantes of God, whom they haue, and doe yet persecute.[48]

Whereas previously Foxe offered this story as a comic and instructive aside from the more serious tales of the early English Reformation (squashed as the anecdote is between the death of Luther and the names of English Henrician Reformist martyrs), in the 1570 edition Foxe presents an altogether more serious tone. In this introduction Foxe explains that his anecdotes about Wolsey ought to be taken as metonymic examples of the sinful pride of the image-obsessed Roman Church. Though he retains the initial apology ("ALthough it be not greatly pertinent vnto thys our historye"), the language of the 1570 introduction makes clear that Foxe felt strongly that Wolsey's actions supported his negative view of the Roman Church. Indeed, the language of the introduction is marked by phrases that indicate how the evil of the Roman Church lies chiefly in its ability to deceive and corrupt: "false glittering church," "caried away with a wrong opinion," and "the vaine pompe & pride of that ambitious church . . . more notoriouslye may appeare to all men." Thus the reader can clearly see how Foxe carefully selected and constructed images of Wolsey to create this "ridiculous spectacle."

"See a butchers dogge"

The *Acts and Monuments* presents several different characterizations of the cardinal to steer readers toward an overall negative (and politically applicable) image. Though Foxe favors anecdotes about Wolsey's pride that act as metonymic attacks on the Roman Church, he also does make reference to Wolsey's lower-class ancestry. Wolsey's father, Robert Wolsey, seems to have been a merchant dealing in livestock in a middling way.[49] While there is some confusion to Robert Wolsey's exact occupation (he may also have been an innkeeper), it is clear that Wolsey could honestly be described as "an honest poore mans Sonne," as Cavendish characterized him.[50] For some—including John Skelton—Wolsey's rise to the pinnacle of Tudor government represented a deeply disturbing reversal of the established social structure. The promotion of commoners to high office was nothing new; indeed, Henry VII had made a

48 Foxe, 1570 ed., 1159.

49 *ODNB*, "Wolsey, Thomas."

50 Gwyn, 1; *Life*, 4.

concerted effort in his government to promote men of ability rather than relying solely on men of good birth.[51] This was far from a standard arrangement, however, and Foxe attempts to demonstrate that concerns about these *homines novi* may have been reasonably widespread at the time:

> at this time [1526] the Cardinall gaue the kynge the lease of the manor of Hampton Court, and the king againe of his gentle nature licenced him to lie in his manor of Richmonde. And so he lay there certain times, but when the common people & specially such as wer king Henry the vii. seruauntes saw the Cardinall kepe house in the royall manner of Richmonde, which king Henry the vii. so muche esteamed, it was a meruaile to here, howe they grudged sayinge. See a butchers dogge lie in the manner of Richmond. These with many other opprobrious woordes were spoken agaynste the Cardinall, whose pride was so hie, that he regarded nothing, yet was he hated of all men.[52]

The former servants of the austere Henry VII found Wolsey's ostentatious lifestyle difficult to bear, according to Foxe: the martyrologist found it a "meruaile" to hear how they often insulted the cardinal, in particular calling him a "butcher's dog." Though Foxe made many changes to the 1563 edition, he retained this story virtually unaltered in the 1570, 1576, and the 1583 editions. By including this anecdote, Foxe not only pursues his overall theme on Wolsey—that the cardinal was an example of the vices of overproud prelates and was fundamentally unworthy of authority—but he also indicates that this was not an unpopular or unusual view of Wolsey. Foxe emphasizes that it was not he who mocked Wolsey's common birth, but that it was "the common people" themselves and the former servants of Henry VII in particular who were most shocked at Wolsey's grandiose decorations and entertainments. Thus Foxe is able to characterize Wolsey as lacking the qualities of either a nobleman (in that his pride was not excusable by his birth) or of a humble common man of God (by virtue of that same unwarranted pride). Neither fish nor fowl, Foxe's Wolsey possesses only the vices and none of the virtues of both the common people and the nobility.

As with the anecdote about the mules, this episode also appears in Hall's *Chronicle*:

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51 Gwyn, 182.

52 Foxe, 1563 ed., 488.

> And at this tyme, the saied Cardinall gaue to the kyng, the lease of the Manor of Hampton Court, whiche he had of the lease of the lord of Sainct Ihones, and on whiche he had doen greate coste. Therefore the kyng of his gentle nature, licensed hym to lie in his Manor of Richemond at his pleasure, and so he laie there at certain tymes: but when the common people, and in especiall suche, as had been kyng Henry the seuenthes seruauntes, sawe the Cardinal kepe house in the Manor royal of Richmond, whiche kyng Henry the seuenth, so highly estemed it, was a maruell to here, how thei grudged and saied, see a Bochers dogge lye in the Manor of Richemond: these with many approbrious wordes, were spoken against the Cardinall, whose pride was so high that the nothyng regarded, and yet was he hated [by] moste men.[53]

Both Hall and Foxe end on a particularly striking note: Foxe writes that Wolsey was "hated of all men," and Hall concludes that Wolsey was "hated [by] moste men." By ending this anecdote by highlighting how universally unpopular Wolsey was, Hall leaves the reader with the final and simple image of Wolsey as an overproud and wholly hated man. When Foxe decided to incorporate this entire passage into the *Acts and Monuments*, he did so because Hall's image of Wolsey clearly fits with Foxe's own images of the cardinal. Furthermore, we can see that Foxe made a conscious effort to edit the typographical errors and awkward wording of the Hall passage by replacing "whose pride was so high that the nothyng regarded, and yet was he hated [by] moste men" with the more composed phrase, "whose pride was so hie, that he regarded nothing, yet was he hated of all men."

The King's Great Matter

By carefully composing, selecting, and editing these anecdotes, Foxe gradually constructed and reinforced his image of Wolsey as a man reviled and disdained by both the common people and the nobility. These anecdotes build a characterization of the cardinal that reaches its peak with Wolsey's role in Henry VIII's divorce from Katherine of Aragon. In these excerpts, we see how Foxe draws together numerous threads from previous anecdotes to include in his recounting of the divorce. Foxe would have been greatly remiss to have foregone the opportunity to lambaste Wolsey for the cardinal's alleged role in Henry VIII's divorce of Katherine of Aragon and his subsequent marriage to Anne Boleyn.

53 Hall, 1548 ed., fols. cxliii–cxliiii.

Foxe clearly felt that this event was a telling one; not only does he provide editorial commentary on the proceedings of the divorce, but he includes substantial portions of the key players' initial letters and arguments, from before and during the legatine trial convened by Wolsey and Campeggio. In particular, Katherine's response to Henry VIII's opening argument focuses heavily on blaming Wolsey for his alleged instigation of the divorce: of Katherine's 371 quoted words in her response, 161 (43% of the total response) are devoted to confronting Wolsey. She accuses him not merely of stirring up the king against her, but also of sins ranging from pride and lechery to instigating pan-European violence:

> But of thys trouble I onlye maye thanke you my Lorde Cardinall of Yorke, for because I haue wondered at your hyghe pryde and vaine glorye, and abhorre your volupteous life, and abhominable Lecherye, and little regarde your presumpteous power and tirannye, therefore of malyce you haue kyndeled thys fyre, and sette this matter a broche, and in especiall for the greate malyce that you beare to my Nephewe the Emperoure, whome I perfectlye knowe you hate worse then a Scorpyon, because he woulde not satisfye your ambition, and make you Pope by force, and therefore you haue sayed more then once, that you wold trouble hym and his frendes, and you haue kepte hym true promyse, for of all his warres and vexations, he onlye maye thancke you, and as for me his pore aunt and kinswoman, what trouble you putte me to, by thys newe found doubt, God knoweth, to whome I commit my cause according to the truth.[54]

Even for an age accustomed to hyperbole, this excerpt exhibits rather strong language. Accusing Wolsey of "hyghe pryde and vaine glorye" and expressing her disgust for his "volupteous life, and abhominable Lecherye," Katherine's words resonate strongly with Foxe's own editorial condemnations of the cardinal. Not only does Katherine accuse Wolsey of being the author of her and the king's troubles, but she explicitly states that the reason for the cardinal's malice lies in his political machinations. Because her nephew Charles V, as Holy Roman Emperor, had refused to back Wolsey's bid to become pope (an event which Foxe describes elsewhere in all four editions), she argues that Wolsey had arranged the divorce proceedings to "trouble hym [Charles V] and his frends."

While the final outcome and purpose of this excerpt is clear—to promote and reinforce the same negative image of Wolsey as a sinful and manipulative

54 Foxe, 1563 ed., 509.

prelate—and does not rely on a clear sense of authorship, it is important to note that this speech is virtually identical in the 1548 edition of Hall's *Chronicle*. Indeed, Hall's version has 370 words to the 371 words in the 1563 Foxe and 372 words in the 1570 Foxe. In addition, Foxe cites Hall in the 1570 edition, stating that "These woordes were spoken in French, and written by Cardinall Campeggio Secretary, whiche was present, and afterward by Edward Hall translated into Englishe."[55] This is confirmed in the 1548 *Chronicle*, in which Hall writes in an aside that "These woordes were spoken in Frenche, and written by Cardinall Campeggio secretory, whiche was present, and by me translated as nere as I could."[56] However, a rather different version of events appears in both editions of Holinshed's *Chronicle*. While Hall (and thus Foxe as well) agrees that Katherine's statement covers two topics (first, her love and fidelity regarding Henry VIII; second, her animosity toward Wolsey), Holinshed breaks up Katherine's response into two parts. First, Holinshed quotes directly from Katherine's speech regarding her obedience to Henry VIII; then Holinshed writes a summary of the second part of what clearly is the same speech that Hall and Foxe provide in direct speech:

> Héere is to be noted, that the quéene in presence of the whole court most gréeuouslie accused the Cardinall of vntruth, deceit, wickednesse, & malice, which had sowne dissention betwixt hir and the king hir husband; and therefore openlie protested, that she did vtterlie abhorre, refuse, and forsake such a iudge, as was not onelie a most malicious enimie to hir, but also a manifest aduersarie to all right and iustice, and therewith did she appeale vnto the pope, committing hir whole cause to be iudged of him.[57]

As a result of Holinshed's paraphrasing Vergil (and not providing a direct reproduction of Katherine's actual speech) we can definitively trace the influence of Foxe and Hall to yet another anti-Wolsey speech of Katherine's: this time, in Shakespeare and Fletcher's *Henry VIII*:

> WOLSEY: Be patient yet.
> KATHERINE: I will, when you are humble; nay before,
> Or God will punish me. I do believe,
> Induced by potent circumstances, that
> You are mine enemy, and make my challenge
> You shall not be my judge. For it is you

55 Foxe, 1570 ed., 1233.

56 Hall, 1548 ed., f. clxxxi^{r}.

57 Holinshed, 1587 ed., 908.

> Have blown this coal betwixt my lord and me –
> Which God's dew quench! Therefore I say again,
> I utterly abhor, yea, from my soul
> Refuse you for my judge, whom yet once more
> I hold my most malicious foe, and think not
> At all a friend to truth.[58]

Despite a general scholarly acknowledgment that Shakespeare and Fletcher relied heavily on the 1587 Holinshed for the historical basis for *Henry VIII*, a number of thematic elements that appeared in Hall and Foxe—but not in Holinshed's summary—make their way into *Henry VIII*.[59] In 2.4, Katherine accuses Wolsey of having "blown this coal," which causes her to "utterly abhor" the cardinal, who is thus her "most malicious foe." She also touches on Wolsey's lack of humility and apparent aversion to truthfulness. Later in the same scene Katherine repeats her earlier insults and adds that "Y'are [Wolsey] meek and humble-mouthed . . . but your heart / Is crammed with arrogancy, spleen and pride."[60] This progression of themes (from Wolsey's pride to fire to the cardinal's personal malice) is identical with the thematic arrangement of Katherine's quoted speech in Foxe (and, by extension, Hall). Stuart Gillespie acknowledges that Shakespeare must have used Foxe and Hall as well as Holinshed (there are numerous instances of Foxe or Hall material throughout Shakespeare's plays); however, Gillespie hypothesizes that Shakespeare used the 1583 or 1597 edition of the *Acts and Monuments* for *2 Henry VI* and *King John*, and suggests that it seems likely that Shakespeare used the 1597 edition for *Henry VIII*.[61] However, Katherine's impassioned speech in the legatine court does not appear in either the 1583 or the 1597 editions. It therefore seems logical to assume that Shakespeare had access to either the 1563 or 1570 Foxe or the 1548 Hall; the 1570 edition of Foxe seems most likely, as it enjoyed the broadest distribution as part of its governmental support.[62] Regardless of the exact source, Katherine's speech (or, at least, the speech attributed to Katherine by Hall and Foxe) contained such powerful images complimentary

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58 *Henry VIII*, 2.4.72–2.4.82.

59 See Walter George Boswell-Stone, *Shakspeare's Holinshed: The Chronicle and the Historical Plays Compared* (London: Lawrence and Bullen, 1896).

60 *Henry VIII*, 2.4.105, 2.4.107–108.

61 Gillespie, 174.

62 Gillespie, 172. It should be noted that Thomas Freeman has argued convincingly that distribution of the 1570 edition was nowhere near complete, and that the presence of the *Acts and Monuments* in parish churches reached its peak just before the English Civil War. For more, see *ODNB*, "Foxe, John."

to the images of Wolsey elsewhere in the *Acts and Monuments* that by the end of the sixteenth century those same images had become the dominant public characterizations of the cardinal. That Shakespeare utilized Foxe over Holinshed demonstrates a conscious selection process for source material and reinforces the argument that Foxe's representations of Wolsey had a traceable impact on subsequent literature.

There is, however, a difficulty raised by the inclusion of Katherine's testimony in the legatine court. The Katherine presented by Foxe is a powerful and sympathetic character; it is perhaps difficult to understand why Foxe would have promoted such a positive image of a figure who was, after all, a pro-Rome symbol in England. Clearly there was some conflict regarding the inclusion of this episode: as mentioned previously, it appears in the 1563 and 1570 editions, but is absent in the later editions. Yet there is a plausible reason for Foxe's initial positive characterization of Katherine: by including a condemnation of Wolsey from such a strong Catholic figure, Foxe underlines Wolsey's negative qualities even more distinctly. Foxe shows his readers that Wolsey was such a sinful and morally corrupt person that even the staunchly Catholic Katherine saw him as an "enemy of truth": in this interpretation, Wolsey represented a great danger to the Roman Church because he deceived and abused his own congregation. This episode highlights how Foxe saw Wolsey—or wanted his readers to see him—as an amoral opportunist who was willing to undermine his fellow Catholics in his quest for temporal power.

The Significant Death

Many of Foxe's anecdotes about Wolsey contain an element of gleeful and self-righteous humor. However, some are purely condemnatory: one of the more powerful stories about the cardinal is the allegory-rich tale of the cardinal's death in 1530. Wolsey died at Leicester Abbey while en route to London to stand trial for treason, having been arrested by George Talbot (fourth earl of Shrewsbury). Foxe states that Wolsey poisoned himself, though it is unclear (perhaps intentionally so) if Foxe felt that Wolsey killed himself intentionally to avoid execution or if the death was an accident. This ambiguity can be seen in how the 1563 and 1570 editions differ on the interpretation of the events that led to the cardinal's death.[63] In the 1563 edition, the manner of Wolsey's death

63 As with the story of the arrival of Campeggio, the account of Wolsey's death in Cavendish's *Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey* differs significantly. Cavendish does not mention any of the more graphic (or potentially allegorical) details of the final days of Wolsey that Foxe relates, though he delves into great detail in all other respects (see *Life*, 177–183).

is only mentioned as an aside in a larger discussion about Stephen Gardiner, bishop of Winchester. In that aside, Foxe writes that Wolsey poisoned himself:

> whether he stonke before he dyed, as Cardinall Wolsey dyd, (who as he had vsed coniuration before, so after he had poysoned hym selfe by the waye, at his buriall was so heauy that they let him fall did geue suche a sauoure that they coulde not abide him, with such a sodain storme & tempest aboute him, that al the torches wente out and coulde beare no light) or whether he died in dispaire. &c. al this I refere either to theire reportes of whom I hard it, or leaue it to the knoledge of them which knowe it better.[64]

Besides telling his readers that Wolsey had poisoned himself, Foxe also includes disturbing omens and portents that he clearly included to reflect on the life of the cardinal. Certainly it would have been difficult for his readers not to feel revulsion at the description of a body, unnaturally heavy, that produced terrible smells even before death; more important, smell would not have been viewed as a mere symptom of illness. One of the traditional signs of saintliness was a sweet, floral smell emanating from the body, persisting even years after burial; the odor of sanctity is generally thus associated with saints and martyrs, and by contrast, foul smells were associated with hell and the devil.[65] By emphasizing how Wolsey stunk even before his death, Foxe underlines the sinful nature of the cardinal.[66] The entire event is perceived as being distinctly unholy: because of the smell, Wolsey is buried in haste and at night, without even the benefit of torchlight. Furthermore, Foxe accuses Wolsey of using "conjurations" to heal himself in the past. In accusing Wolsey of having mysteriously cured himself of serious illnesses before, Foxe confirms other accounts that describe the cardinal as having been ill repeatedly in the final years of his life:

> At first Wolsey had been a robustly healthy man, but as he aged he suffered from the stone (perhaps gallstones rather than kidney stones), jaundice, fevers, throat infections, and colic, and latterly from oedema (localized dropsy). His sickness grew worse after his fall, so that he lost his appetite

64 Foxe, 1563 ed., 1452.

65 See Suzanne Evans, "The Scent of a Martyr," *Numen* 49, no. 2 (2002): 193–211.

66 Charles H. Parker, "Diseased Bodies, Defiled Souls: Corporality and Religious Difference in the Reformation," *ELR* 67, no. 4 (2014), 1265–1297.

> and slept badly. He also suffered several times from the sweat. In the last two or three years of his life, moreover, he underwent several moments of near collapse, though skilled medical attention enabled him to recover from them. Adult onset diabetes seems a possible diagnosis. Even then easily identifiable, it was often linked to loosenesses of the bowels which were commonly termed "dysentery."[67]

Having survived such serious illnesses, Foxe (and others) may well have felt that Wolsey possessed unnatural healing powers. Perhaps conscious of the opportunity to exploit the power of the imagistically significant death, Foxe revisted Wolsey's death to reinforce Wolsey's own culpability as part of a substantially expanded account of the death of the cardinal:

> When the Cardinal was thus arrested, the king sent Syr William Kingston, Knight, Captaine of the Garde and Constastle of the Tower of London, with certayne yomen of the Garde, to Sheffeld, to fetch the Cardinal to the Tower. When the Cardinall saw the Captain of the Garde, he was sore astonied and shortly became sicke, for then he perceiued some great trouble toward him, and for that cause, men sayd that hee willyngly tooke so much quantitie of a strong purgation, that his nature was not able to beare it.[68]

In this account, Foxe clarifies the manner of Wolsey's death using rumor to claim that the cardinal took too strong a dose of purgatives: in the 1563 edition, Foxe only says that Wolsey "poysoned hym selfe." Foxe implies that rumor ("men sayd") had that Wolsey committed suicide, a mortal sin especially criminal for a prince of the Church. However, Foxe markedly does not indulge himself in speculating about rumor and instead continues his account with a wealth of grotesque and morally weighted detail:

> Also the matter that came from hym was so blacke, that the steining therof, could not be gotten out of hys blanckets by any meanes. But Syr William Kingston comforted hym, and by easie iorneys hee brought him to the Abbey of Leycester, the. xxvij. day of Nouember, where, for very feblenes of nature, caused by purgations and vomities, he dyed the second night folowyng, and in the same Abbey lyeth buryed. It is testified by

67 *ODNB*, "Wolsey, Thomas."

68 Foxe, 1570 ed., 1172.

> one, yet beyng a lyue, in whose armes the sayd Cardinall dyed, that his body beyng dead, was blacke as pitch, also was so heauy, that vi. could scarse beare it. Futhermore, it did so stinke aboue the ground, that they were constreyned to hasten the buriall therof in the night season, before it was day. At the which buriall, such a tempest, with such a stinche there arose, that all the torches went out, and so he was throwen into the tombe, and there was layd.[69]

Besides encouraging a quite understandable physical revulsion in his readers toward the cardinal, Foxe's version of the death and burial of Wolsey is loaded with symbols and portents of Wolsey's sinfulness. The "black matter" that stained Wolsey's sheets is both a medical symptom and divine confirmation of Wolsey's wickedness. As Thomas Freeman points out, illnesses involving the bowels were often seen as divine retribution; Foxe writes that a William Grimwood (whom Foxe accused of perjuring himself against a Protestant) was struck down by God: "sodenly hys bowelles fel out of hys body, and ymmediatly most miserably hee died: such was the terrible iudgemente of God."[70] This was the same uncomfortable manner of death as the heresiarch Arius, founder of the fourth century Arian heresy condemned at the Council of Nicaea, and was also derived from the writings of Lactantius, an early Christian and adviser of the emperor Constantine.[71] Certainly these grim images of sudden illness and death fit well with Wolsey's own death. Foxe emphasizes the grotesque nature of Wolsey's death by detailing how Wolsey's body was "black as pitch" and so unnaturally heavy that six men could hardly carry him. Finally, Foxe reiterates how badly Wolsey's body smelled. These details imbue Wolsey's death with a clear polemical reading. However, in the 1570, 1576, and 1583 editions Foxe adds further details; not only does he retain the foul-smelling "tempest" that blew at the burial and snuffed the torches, but he states that the smell of the body was so bad that the burial was forced to take place the night before it was originally scheduled and that the bearers, unable to bear the stench, threw the body ignominiously into the tomb:

> Furthermore, it did so stinke aboue the ground, that they were constreyned to hasten the buriall therof in the night season, before it was day. At the which buriall, such a tempest, with such a stinche there arose, that

69 Foxe, 1570 ed., 1172.

70 Foxe, 1563 ed., 1786.

71 Freeman, "Fate, Faction, and Fiction in Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs,'" 604.

> all the torches went out, and so he was throwen into the tombe, and there was layd.[72]

It may well be objected that Foxe was simply reporting the details of the cardinal's death as they were told to him; however, a comparison of the account of Wolsey's death with those of other figures reviled by Foxe reveals the martyrologist's editorial presence in the text. Foxe often imbues his death accounts with particular moral imagery or editorial comments designed to lead his readers to share his moral judgment of the person(s) being discussed. For example, he tells his readers that Thomas Arundel, archbishop of Canterbury (1353–1414) died of an appropriately swollen tongue:

> Thomas Arundle Archbishop of Canterburye was so stricken in his tongue, that neither he could swalow nor speake, for a certain space before hys death, much like after the example of the rich glotton, and so died vpon the same. And thys was thought of manye to happen vnto hym, for that he so bound the word of the Lord, that it should not be preached in his daies &c.[73]

Foxe directly links the cause of Arundel's death with his allegedly sinful nature: as Arundel preached falsely, divine retribution made his tongue swell and stopped his preaching. In the 1570, 1576, and 1583 editions, Foxe revises the brief mention of Wolsey's death in the account of Stephen Gardiner's death, making clear that Wolsey's portentous death was in a similar vein to Stephen Gardiner's and Jacob Latomus's:

> But (as I sayd before) of vncertaine thinges I can speake but vncertaynly. Wherfore as touching the maner and order of his [Gardiner's] death, how rich he dyed, what wordes he spake, what litle repentaunce hee shewed, whether hee dyed with his tounge swolne and out of his mouth, as Archbishop of Caunt. pag. 700. or whether hee stonke before he dyed, as Cardinall Wolsey dyd, read before pag. 1133. or whether he dyed in dispayre as Latomus and others dyd. &c. all this I referre either to their reportes of whom I heard it, or leaue it to the knowledge of them which know it better.[74]

72 Foxe, 1570 ed., 1172.

73 Foxe, 1563 ed., 328.

74 Foxe, 1570 ed., 1991.

Foxe uses an indirect approach to characterization in this excerpt: he does not actually say that Gardiner died unrepentant, stinking, with a swollen tongue, and in despair. He instead states that he can only speak "vncertaynly" about these hypothetical details of the bishop's death. Nevertheless, by providing such specific and graphic details, the reader is left with mental connections between all these images, Bishop Gardiner and the other discredited churchmen in the *Acts and Monuments*. Foxe's editorial process also confirms his manipulation of the text in order to encourage negative imagery of Gardiner. In the 1563 edition, Foxe includes the following anecdote:

> I wyl not here speake of, what hath bene constantly reported to me, of the monstrous makinge and fashion of his feat and toes, the nailes wherof are said not to be like other men, but to croke doune ward & sharp like the clawes of a beast.[75]

This story is related through the same authorial practice as the imagined details of Gardiner's death; as Freeman observes, "Foxe does not say that this information is true, he merely repeats it by saying that he will not repeat it."[76] However, the anecdote is absent from the later editions; though we cannot say for certain that Foxe himself felt that the tale was inappropriate, its absence indicates a clear editorial manipulation of these morally weighted anecdotes about men like Gardiner and Wolsey.

Foxe's account of the death of Wolsey certainly reflects the author's attempt to inject moral judgments into perhaps fictitious and clearly allegorical events. As with the story about the humiliation of Wolsey and Campeggio with the mules, the account of Wolsey's death given by Cavendish is substantially different from that given by Foxe. Cavendish provides a wealth of details about the death of the cardinal, but confirms almost none of the elements Foxe mentions. Instead, Cavendish relates how Wolsey was taken ill while travelling to London; despite his illness, Wolsey would not eat upon realizing that it was a fast day. He confessed his sins and foretold that he would not live long:

> Sir/ quod he/ I tary but the wyll & pleasure of god/ to render vnto hyme my symple sowlle in to hys dyvyn handes/ Not yet so sir/ quod master kyngeston/ with the grace of god ye shall lyve & do very well if ye wyll be of good cheare/ Master kyngeston my desease is suche that I cannot lyve/ . . . And if ye se in me no alteracion/ than is there no remedye

75 Foxe, 1563 ed., 1451.

76 Thomas Freeman, Editorial comment to Foxe, 1563 ed., 1451.

> (allthoughe I may lyve a day or twayne)/ But deathe whiche is the best remedy of the three//[77]

Wolsey's deathbed apology and piety is no less a propagandist's image than that of his black and bloated body being dumped into a grave in the night. Cavendish not only enriches his account with direct speech from the cardinal, but also arranges that speech to make Wolsey seem a polar opposite to the evil creature Foxe describes. Indeed, one of the most well-known reported statements of Wolsey's is included by Cavendish to demonstrate both Wolsey's humility and the diligence with which he pursued the king's business: "I se the matter ayenst me howe it is framed/ But if I had serued god as dyligently as I haue don the kyng he wold not haue gevyn me ouer in my gray heares/."[78] Wolsey's final words underscore Cavendish's image of the cardinal as a fundamentally good (if flawed) character who ultimately deserves sympathy, not scorn.

The examination of how Foxe constructed a particular characterization of Cardinal Wolsey is an essential step toward understanding not only how early English Protestant writers created propagandist literature, but also toward a greater understanding of the period and the people who shaped it. Though this chapter does not constitute an attempt to examine historical figures and events exclusively out of a historiographical impulse, a happy by-product of this investigation is to provide material from which conclusions about those figures and events may be drawn. Whatever the value of historical insights that might be gleaned from examining these characterizations, however, we cannot ignore the value of the *Acts and Monuments* as a rhetorical and polemical work. The anecdotes about Wolsey collected, composed, and edited by Foxe were manipulated for a single propagandist purpose: to demonstrate and reiterate to the reader that Wolsey was a symbol of all the alleged evils of the Roman Church. By highlighting specific incidents (real or rumored) in Wolsey's life and creating striking, highly visual descriptions of these moments, Foxe demonstrates evidence of a turning point in sixteenth-century representations of Wolsey. Whereas prior authors had attacked or defended Wolsey individually for satirical, personal, or historiographical reasons, Foxe utilized Wolsey as a metonym in a wider religious discussion. Vain, proud, ostentatious, and greedy for temporal power and wealth, Foxe's Wolsey embodies the pompous and monstrous prelates pictured in the woodcuts of the *Acts and Monuments*: a powerfully memorable image that informed public conceptions of Wolsey for the rest of the sixteenth century and beyond.

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77 *Life*, 178.

78 *Life*, 178–179.

CHAPTER 4

"Handling This Story Effectualie": Editorializing Wolsey in Holinshed's *Chronicles*

In reflecting on the life of Thomas Wolsey, posterity has largely settled in favor of an image of a stereotypically grand prelate of Rome: overly worldly, overreaching, pompous, and manipulative. As we have seen, these images came to be stereotypical largely because of the characterizations of Wolsey created by authors like Foxe. However, Foxe's polemical manipulation of Wolsey's image was not the only manner in which Elizabethan historians characterized Wolsey. Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*, which was published initially in 1577 and again in 1587 following extensive revision by Abraham Fleming, presents a significantly more complex construction of the cardinal adapted from previous histories. Widely disparate motivations among the various editorial and authorial teams led by Holinshed and Fleming respectively meant that the two editions of the *Chronicles* have often seemed like a patchwork, without a "conception of history writing as selective" and therefore disorganized and self-contradictive.[1] This pejorative interpretation of the *Chronicles* has forced the relegation of Holinshed to the footnotes of Shakespeare's works and has, by and large, been the dominant view for most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Works like W. G. Boswell-Stone's *Shakspeare's Holinshed* only served to reinforce the view that "we care about *Holinshed's Chronicles* because Shakespeare read them."[2] Only recently has the *Chronicles* been considered as a seminal work, essential not only to understanding Shakespeare but also to considering much broader themes across diverse disciplines.[3] Though the conflicting nature of Wolsey in the *Chronicles* is essential to understanding how Shakespeare and Fletcher created their own Wolsey in *Henry VIII*, this characterization is more significant than just as a

1 Levy, cited in Patterson, 4.

2 Booth, cited in Patterson, 1.

3 Patterson, 4. The publication of the 1577 and 1587 editions online by the Holinshed Project (http://www.cems.ox.ac.uk/holinshed/) was foundational to the development of this chapter. This online edition, together with the recent publication of *The Oxford Handbook of Holinshed's Chronicles*, ed. Paulina Kewes, Ian Archer, and Felicity Heal (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), represent a surge in scholarly interest in the *Chronicles* and are sure to change how we read this seminal text.

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source for that play. It is therefore crucial not to castigate those historians broadly and ignore the features they correctly identified, if in a limited sense, as the literary applications of the *Chronicles.* The characterizations of Wolsey in the *Chronicles* provide a unique opportunity to see how two editors, drawing on diverse sources, utilized different editorial methods to provide negative characterizations of Thomas Wolsey.

The two editions of the *Chronicles* are particularly important beyond their direct relevance in regards to representations of Cardinal Wolsey because they play a synergistic role when considered alongside Foxe's *Acts and Monuments.* Following on from Polydore Vergil's *Anglica historia* in 1534, texts like the *Acts and Monuments* and the *Chronicles* demonstrate a splintering of subgenres that complicates our understanding of Tudor history and historiography.[4] While Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* provides the English Church with historical legitimization through the connections it draws between the early Church, the suffering of the martyrs, and the ongoing Reformation in England, the *Chronicles* provided England with a (broadly) secular interpretation of the same events. The synergistic effect of these two texts was to provide England with an ancient religious, political, and cultural history roughly commensurate with those found in the classical historians' accounts of the Roman Empire. Thus while the Wolsey(s) found in the *Chronicles* might differ in tenor from those found in Foxe, both sets of characterizations participate in the same historiographical purpose: to legitimize England as a nation-state analogous to the Roman Empire through the provision of histories.[5]

All other concerns aside, there is a glaring issue that every Holinshed scholar must confront: who was responsible for the content of the *Chronicles*?[6] Merely using the name 'Holinshed' is contentious: both editions were the products of various editors, authors, assistants, and outside contributors. Annabelle Patterson's discussion of multivocality reminds us of Holinshed's own self-figuring as a compiler, rather than an author (in a traditional sense). Therefore, we must understand the distinction between Holinshed's voice as compiler, and Holinshed's voice as author. Holinshed-as-author is notoriously difficult

4 For more, see the introduction to this volume and F. J. Levy's *Tudor Historical Thought* (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1967).

5 See Cathy Shrank, *Reading the Nation in Reformation England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

6 See Felicity Heal and Henry Summerson, "The Genesis of the Two Editions," in *The Oxford Handbook of Holinshed's Chronicles*, ed. Felicity Heal, Ian W. Archer, and Paulina Kewes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), www.oxfordhandbooks.com.

to locate, nearly to the point of "invisibility."[7] His style can been observed in prefatory material where he employs a trope of simplicity, eschewing adverbs and analogies for a "rudeness" intended to convey honesty.[8] Fleming's marginal notations and other paratextual additions often provide a more overtly opinionated reading, but textual or paratextual interjections feature from a very wide range of contributors, often with clear differences in purpose or motivation: this is not a text that conforms to simple labels about authorship.

To attempt to deconstruct and identify the authors of particular passages is not unimportant and is often, as with Edmund Campion's contributions, illuminating; however, my purpose here is to consider the text as it emerged from the press, shaped by Raphael Holinshed (for the 1577 edition) or Abraham Fleming (for the 1587 edition), and sold as such. Therefore, in the interest of maintaining a wider focus on the composite image of Wolsey created by these editors and contributors, rather than focusing on specific authorial attributions this consideration uses "Holinshed" to acknowledge a an overarching authorial/editorial position and not necessarily only the writings of the man himself (unless otherwise noted). When considering the 1587 edition, the significant additions and revisions produced by Abraham Fleming demand that we recognize the 1587 edition as a product not of Raphael Holinshed but instead as the result of the efforts of an entirely new editorial team, which was overseen by Fleming. For this reason, we will consider the 1587 edition to be a product of Fleming's. This does not apply to passages explicitly cited as deriving from named authors or sources.

This concern with editorial authority raises a further complication. Speaking about the *Chronicles*' as though they were a single text is problematic; only some of these issues can be dealt with by aggregating each editorial team's contributions under the umbrella entities of "Holinshed" and "Fleming." These two editions are distinct from one another, though they are closely related, and to gloss over the differences between these two texts hobbles more specific textual analysis. Annabel Patterson argues that the problems associated with conglomerating these two separate editions are, in fact, a strength: she has listed this multivocality as one of her four posited 'guiding principles' in the *Chronicles*:

> Given the nature of post-Reformation experience, which set Protestants and Catholics against each other in changing patterns of domination and

7 Patterson, 30.

8 Matthew Woodcock, "Narrative Voice and Influencing the Reader," in Heal, Archer, and Kewes, *The Oxford Handbook of Holinshed's Chronicles*.

> repression, a national history should not and could not be univocal, but must shoulder the responsibility of representing diversity of opinion. Wherever possible, moreover, diversity should be expressed as multivocality, which the *Chronicles* recording verbatim what they found in earlier historians or contemporary witnesses. A corollary of this principle was that although the individual chroniclers might hold and express strong opinions of their own, especially on religion, the effect of the work *as a whole* would be of incoherence, here used as a positive term.[9]

This characterization of the *Chronicles* as "incoherent" provides an excellent opportunity to summarize how the Wolsey episodes demonstrate the difficulties with discussing the *Chronicles* as a whole. In one respect, Patterson's characterization of the *Chronicles* is accurate. If we consider both editions together as a larger work, they are incoherent: the 1577 and 1587 edition are distinct texts, with different authors, editors, and approaches to historiography, and Patterson's argument (which focuses primarily on broader socio-political themes) acknowledges and celebrates this. For analysis of a specific figure, this approach is limited to a collective demonstration that the Wolsey episodes in both texts adapted and reinforced previously available negative imagery of the cardinal (though editorial interpretation and commentary makes Patterson's use of verbatim contentious). For our purposes, it is therefore most useful not to think of the *Chronicles* collectively, but rather to consider both editions separately and demonstrate the differences between their editorial practices: the 1577 edition systematically undercuts positive anecdotes with negative ones, and the 1587 edition steers the reader through editorial interjections. These distinct mechanisms typify the significant differences in editorial approaches taken by Holinshed and Fleming, and further complicate any reference to the *Chronicles* as a single text.

When approaching texts as large as the *Chronicles*, particularly when the issues surrounding authorship and editorial responsibility are taken into consideration, it is essential to isolate key elements of the text for examination. However, even restricting one's attention to the anecdotes featuring Wolsey to the exclusion of all others leaves just under a hundred unique episodes in each edition. This discussion therefore focuses on episodes that most clearly demonstrate one or more of several key features. Episodes featuring guiding paratextual elements and, in particular, those which contain editorial marginalia have been selected as broadly representative of a particular author's attempt to steer the reader's understanding of a passage. Equally, episodes that contain

9 Patterson, 7.

clear editorialization of an event (as compared with the same event in Foxe, Cavendish, or Hall) have also been considered. In addition, episodes that differ significantly from the source text or account from which they were taken have been analyzed based on the assumption that if Holinshed (or one of his colleagues), having read a passage by an earlier writer, had decided to alter that anecdote, that must indicate a conscious attempt to manipulate the effect of that section. Finally, for the purposes of comparison, episodes that present a clear image of Wolsey which is thematically linked to editorialized portions of the text, but do not themselves contain overtly editorialized elements, have been examined to reveal more subtle means of image-crafting. Episodes from the 1577 edition are analyzed first, followed by episodes from the 1587 edition, to facilitate comparison and draw out editorial techniques.

The 1577 Edition: Holinshed and the "Perfite Cardinall"

The 1577 edition of the *Chronicles*, produced at the very end of Holinshed's life, was initially supposed to form only a section of a much larger and more ambitious project—the *Polychronicon*—to create a chronicle for the entire world. Conceived of as a universal cosmography by Reyner Wolfe (d. in or before 1574), king's printer during Edward VI's reign, the *Polychronicon* never managed to get beyond the research phase after Wolfe's death (though the groundwork was utilized extensively by later chroniclers, John Stow being foremost among them).[10] The one exception to this general lack of completion was the history of England, Scotland, and Ireland, which had been given to Wolfe's assistant, Raphael Holinshed (*c.* 1525–1580?). Little is known about Holinshed, who likely was a Cambridge graduate and may have been a Reformist minister in Edward VI's reign, who left (or was removed from) his ecclesiastic career when Mary acceded to the throne.[11] The textual evidence he bequeathed to posterity suggests he was a moderate Reformist; his *Chronicles* contains far less of the fiery evangelical polemic of his more radical contemporaries, of whom Foxe was most prominent. He was supported by two chief assistants, William Harrison (1535–1593) and Richard Stanihurst (1547–1618). Harrison was a radical ecclesiastic who, much like Holinshed, generally endeavored to keep his religious feelings out of the *Chronicles* despite his religious affiliation.[12] Stanihurst by contrast was an outspoken conservative and the protégé of Edmund Campion,

10 *ODNB*, "Reyner Wolfe."

11 *ODNB*, "Raphael Holinshed."

12 *ODNB*, "William Harrison."

from whose *History of Ireland* significant material was drawn.[13] Though all three men did attempt to keep the *Chronicles* as a nonpolemical history, elements of their religious feelings had a significant impact on the project, as is evidenced in many of the Wolsey anecdotes. Nevertheless, in many ways the 1577 edition acts as a secular history, particularly when paired with John Foxe's ecclesiastic history, the *Acts and Monuments*. Holinshed and his assistants therefore needed to minimize their own authorial hand in the text as a result of their personal religious beliefs. In many ways the various spiritual and political positions held by these men aligned when preparing the sections on Wolsey in the 1577 edition; the Protestants Holinshed and Harrison could write negatively about Wolsey because he was a Catholic, and the Catholic Stanihurst could do the same because Wolsey had failed to head off the chain of events which led to the split with Rome, had attempted to obtain Henry VIII's divorce, and had ordered the suppression of monasteries.

As mentioned above, to highlight some of the trends in the characterization of Wolsey, particular anecdotes have been selected to act as case studies because they exemplify particularly relevant facets of the *Chronicles* and its characterization of Wolsey. In addition, the chapter examines how in the text the reader is presented with two general themes concerning Wolsey's pride: first, that Wolsey himself was flawed and unworthy to be a prince of the Church or high-ranking statesman; second, that Wolsey, being in a position of spiritual and secular authority, served as a bad example to lesser men and actively prevented good men from doing their work. The first theme, that of the personal problems associated with Wolsey's less-than-laudable character, is laid out clearly throughout the 1577 edition and forms the backbone of this particular representation of Wolsey. The first explicitly editorialized anecdote in which Wolsey appears details how the cardinal, having received his appointment as Lord Chancellor, began to make enemies:

> At the ende of this Parliament, Doctor Warham Archbishop of Canterburie, and as then lord Chauncellour, perceyuing howe the new Lorde Cardinall medled further in his office of Chauncellourship than he could well suffer, except hee should aduenture the kings displeasure, for thys and for other considerations gaue vp his office of Chauncellor into the kings handes, and deliuered to him the great seale, which incontinently was deliuered by the king vnto the Lorde Cardinall, and so was he made Lorde Chauncellor. He was no sooner in that office, but hee directed forth Commissions into euerie shire, for the execution of the

13 *ODNB*, "Richard Stanihurst."

> statutes of apparell and labourers, and in all his doings shewed himselfe more loftie and presumptuous than became him, which caused him to be greatly mislyked of many, and the more, for that his base byrth was knowne of all men, so that the nobilitie (as reason was) disdeyned to be at his correction.[14]

Even before he gained his first major secular office, Wolsey is represented as having "medled" in his predecessor's affairs, and from the moment he gained that office, as being "more loftie and presumptious" than Warham, negative qualities which made him broadly unpopular. These pejorative terms set the tone for how Wolsey is portrayed throughout the 1577 edition: he is consistently referred to in this manner, and is particularly linked with pomposity. References to Wolsey's pride are included even in relatively innocuous or brief passages:

> When al things were concluded, the king and the Ambassadors coude to the cathedrall Church of S. Paule in London from Durham place, where the Cardinal of England sang the Masse in moste pompous maner: and after that Masse was ended, Doctor Pace the kings Secretarye, made an eloquent Oration in praise of peace: and that done, the king and his nobles and the Ambassadors went to the Bishops Palace, and ther dined, and after dinner, the king roade againe to Durham place.[15]

This passage particularly highlights the facility with which the 1577 authors label Wolsey as "pompous": it is a simple, relatively straightforward passage describing a series of events which, plainly speaking, do not have much to do with Wolsey. Despite his lack of general importance to the anecdote, Wolsey is only one of two figures in the anecdote whose actions are given any sort of adjectival adjustment: the other, Richard Pace, is praised for his "eloquent Oration." It is therefore likely that the reference to Wolsey's being "pompous" is not exclusively meant to indicate Wolsey's sinful pride, but rather to indicate the grandeur of the event.[16]

Much like Foxe, the 1577 *Chronicles* makes much of Wolsey's pride and it would be tempting to claim that the two chronicles are closely similar. Though certainly similarities do exist, there is a particularly striking difference in how

14 Holinshed, 1577 ed., 1497.

15 Holinshed, 1577 ed., 1505–1506.

16 See *OED*, "pompous," senses 1 and 2.

the two chronicles interpret Wolsey's character. Foxe holds up Wolsey as an exemplar of a prelate of Rome: overproud and overpromoted, he is made into a metonym for the Roman Church and embodies all the perceived evils of that organization. The Holinshed authors take a different approach and instead describes Wolsey's pride as a personal vice, made all the more grievous by his ostensible responsibility to be pious. Indeed, *Holinshed* implies that Wolsey not only saw himself as of higher status than the secular nobility, but also superior to his fellow churchmen: "And now that he was thus a perfite Cardinall he looked aboue all estates, whiche purchased him great hatred and disdaine on all sides."[17] Here Holinshed uses irony to demonstrate how Wolsey was overfocused on accruing honors and dignities: having just received his cardinal's hat, Wolsey now is a "perfite" cardinal and grants himself license to behave inappropriately and above his station. The implication is that Wolsey, who so clearly believes in the potency of the symbolic power of the hat, does not understand that the values the hat really represents (i.e., piety and service in the Church) are absent from his character; to this Wolsey, the hat makes the cardinal. Indeed, Holinshed does something rather different in this passage than the equivalent passage in Foxe: instead of using scenes like these to portray Wolsey as representative of all cardinals (and Roman churchmen), Holinshed uses irony to underscore how this overproud Wolsey had not only misunderstood the purpose of the prelatic symbols, but that in doing so he had demonstrated his unfitness for that office. This distinction is clarified when the rest of the ostensibly more objective passage preceding this one is taken into account:

> In the end of Nouember, the Cardinals hat was sent into Englande, which the Gentlemen of Kent receyued, and brought to London, *wyth such tryumph as though the greatest Prince in Europe had bene come to visit the king*. And on a Sunday in Saint Peters Church at Westminster he receyued the habite, Hat, piller, & other such tokens of a Cardinal. *And now that he was thus a perfite Cardinall he looked aboue all estates, whiche purchased him great hatred and disdaine on all sides*.[18]

By adding interjections like "wyth such tryumph as though the greatest Prince in Europe had bene come to visit the king," the 1577 *Chronicles* portray Wolsey as a man more concerned with self-gratifying symbols than the positive

17 Holinshed, 1577 ed., 1498.

18 Holinshed, 1577 ed., 1498; emphasis added.

qualities which the symbol ought to represent: a concern which earned him general unpopularity.

This concern with symbols is a theme common throughout Wolsey's character in the 1577 edition. Two particular episodes are constructed to demonstrate the problem with such a misalignment of priorities. The first states how Wolsey was so proud that he forced the highest peers in the realm to serve him when he sang Mass:

> The Cardinall himselfe grew so into such exceeding pryde, that hee thought himselfe e[qu]all with the King, and when he sayde Masse (which he did oftner to shew his pompe, rather than for any deuotion) he made Dukes and Erles to serue him of wine, with a say taken, and to hold to him the Bason at the La[v]atorie.[19]

Opprobrious phrases like "exceeding pryde" and "thought himselfe e[qu]all with the King" here work in conjunction with the parenthetical statement informing the reader that Wolsey said Mass often not out of piety, but pride. Holinshed also further emphasizes the exceptional level of pride Wolsey displayed with a succinct marginal comment: "The excess[ive] pride of the Cardinal."[20] There is no evidence provided that Wolsey did actually think himself on an equal footing with the king, and the author supports his conjecture with the observable fact of the nobility of England serving him at mass. This scene, that of a pompous cardinal "gr[o]w[ing]" into such a proud state that he compelled dukes and earls to serve him in his office, is both simple and striking. It meshes with the author's earlier statement that Wolsey's own exploitation of these displays bought him enmity. Holinshed follows this episode with another that underlines Wolsey's obsessive concern with image; in this example, we can see how Wolsey not only publicly promoted a grandiose image of himself through belittling others, but he also did so in private correspondence, even among his nominal peers:

> It fortuned that the Archbishop of Canterburie wrote a letter to the Cardinal, an[d] after that he had receyued his power lega[t]tine, the whiche letter after his olde familiar maner, he subscribed thus: Your brother William of Canterburie. With which subscription, bycause the Archbishop wrote him brother, he was so much offended, as though the Archbishop had done him great iniurie, that he could not temper his

19 Holinshed, 1577 ed., 1505.

20 Holinshed, 1577 ed., 1505.

> mood, but in high displeasure sayde, that he would so worke within a while, that he should well vnderstand howe he was his superior, and not his brother.
>
> When the Archbishop (beeing a sober wise man) hearde of the Messenger that bare the letter how the Cardinall tooke it not well, but so as it might seeme there was a great fault in the letter, and reported the tale as one that mislyked the Cardinals presumption herein: peace (sayde the Archbishop) knowest thou not howe the man is become madde with too muche ioy. And thus the Cardinall forgetting to hold the right path of true la[u]de and prayse, sought to be feared rather than beloued of all good men.[21]

This parable of the dangers of pride is all the more effective in that it does not succumb to the lure of polemical invective, as Foxe often does. This is not an attack upon the Roman Church, or even on the Church's prelates. It is essential to note that it is only Wolsey who is being castigated, whereas Archbishop Warham (who was Wolsey's superior and the preeminent ecclesiastic in England prior to the cardinal's being appointed legate *a latere*) is described by way of contrast as "beeing a sober wise man." By highlighting the differences between these two most senior churchmen, Holinshed emphasizes how Wolsey had "forgott[en] to hold the right path of true [laude] and prayse." In characterizing Wolsey as having lost this "right path" and Warham as having remained true to it, Holinshed makes clear the distinction between Wolsey and a more positive example of a high-level ecclesiastic. The chief danger associated with Wolsey's pride, as Holinshed has represented it, was not an issue specifically or exclusively associated with the Roman Church. Wolsey's was an individual flaw, not an institutional one. The final sentence of the passage underscores Wolsey's amorality by virtue of a topical literary association: Holinshed here is referencing Niccolò Machiavelli's 1514 *The Prince*, which advised its readers to understand that a ruler should seek to be loved and feared.[22] Machiavelli advises that if both were not possible, the ruler should cause his subjects to fear rather than love him. Machiavelli's reputation in the sixteenth century was not positive, to say the least: Reginald Pole, one of his earliest English detractors, associated Machiavelli with the devil, and Machiavelli was often

21 Holinshed, 1577 ed., 1505.

22 Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Rufus Goodwin (Boston: Dante University Press, 2003), 98.

accused of being an atheist.[23] By making reference to *The Prince* in such a manner as to imply Wolsey's conscious adoption of a political theory resembling Machiavelli's, Holinshed accuses Wolsey of amoral manipulation of the English state and Church, hardly a model of a pious churchman.

The second theme of the 1577 Wolsey, as has already been mentioned, was that the cardinal's vices prevented good works and positive reforms being carried out. Holinshed and his assistants are careful to demonstrate Wolsey's greed, ambition, and pride as detrimental not just to Wolsey personally but also more broadly throughout the ecclesiastical and political spheres, as we can see in the following excerpt:

> There attended him to Rome one Iohn Clearke a Lawyer, as Ambassadour from the King, which obteyned for the Cardinall authoritie to dispense with al men for offences committed agaynst the spirituall lawes, which parte of his power legantine was verie profitable and gainfull. For then he set vp a Court, and called it the Court of the Legate, in the whiche he proued testaments, and hearde causes, to the great hynderance of al the Bishops of this Realme.
>
> He visited Bishops, and all the Cleargie exempt and not exempt, and vnder colour of reformation hee got much treasure, for through brybes and rewards, notorious offendours were dispensed with, so that nothing was refourmed but came to more mischiefe.[24]

Having been led—through ambition, it must be noted—to petition the pope to name him as legate *a latere*, Wolsey used his legatine powers to profit himself and bypass the authority of the bishops, which naturally earned him many enemies. To make matters worse, he cloaked his "mischiefe" under the guise of reform: a matter of substantial public interest and unrest. Thus Wolsey enriched himself at the expense of undermining the other power centers in the English Church, a course of action which created weakness throughout the entire organization. Indeed, the cardinal's poor example trickled down to create degeneracy throughout the English Church:

> The example of his pride, caused Priste[s] and all spirituall persons to waxe so prowde, that they ruffled it out in veluet and silles, which they ware both in gownes, iackets, doublets and sh[oe]wes.

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23 For more information, see Antony Grafton's introduction to Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. George Bull (London: Penguin, 1999).

24 Holinshed, 1577 ed., 1504–1505.

> They vsed open lechery, and bare themselues so stoute by reason of his authorities and faculties, that no man durst reproue any thing to them.[25]

If we, as readers, are left in any doubt about the effects of Wolsey's bad example, the marginal comment associated with this episode further underscores the message. Holinshed reminds his readers that the actions of public figures ripple down throughout society: "Example of great ones what it d[id]." Holinshed presents a strong characterization by giving an account of an event, describing the effects of the actions that take place, and then sums up the moral of the anecdote in the text and in a marginal comment.

Not all of the anecdotes about Wolsey were purely derogatory, however. Holinshed's inclusion of a small number of more positive anecdotes provides a superficial semblance of balance between positive and negative representations of the cardinal. That is not to say that Wolsey is a positive character in the *Chronicles*: indeed, each positive statement is closely followed by a negative anecdote, editorial, or proviso that largely undermines the previous positive excerpt. In the following two extracts, we can see a clear example of this organizational tool:

> This yeare the Cardinal caused all those to be called to accounts that had medled with the kings money, and had the occupying thereof, in the warres or else where.
>
> This audite troubled manye, for some were founde in arrerages, and some saued by policie and briberie, and waxed rich, and some were wrongfully punished. And surely he so punished periurie with open infamie, causing the offenders to weare Papers,[26] and so forth, that in his time it was lesse vsed. He punished also Lordes, knights, and men of all degrees, for riots, for bearing out wrongs, and for maintenance practised in their country, that the poore men liued quietly, so that no man durst vse suche bolstring, for feare of imprisonment.[27]

Here, the author describes how Wolsey aggressively pursued wrongdoers irrespective of their social station, despite the obvious political dangers of such a course of action. Of course, Holinshed does observe that some were able to escape punishment by means of bribery, and that some were wrongfully

25 Holinshed, 1577 ed., 1505.

26 "A notice fastened on the back of a criminal undergoing punishment, specifying his or her offence," *OED* "paper," 8.

27 Holinshed, 1577 ed., 1498.

punished: despite those hitches, however, Wolsey did manage to repress perjury. Holinshed provides commentary and further examples immediately following this anecdote:

> These doings were worthie of commendation in him, but surely much more, if hir had beene a man that coulde haue kept a meane, which hee coulde not doe, but through his pompe and presumptuous pride, wanne him high disdaine in the ende, of al men, not only offending the nobles, and high estates of the realme, but also the whole multitude of people, which could not away with his vaineglorious pride, and namely for that hee tooke vppon him the gouernaunce of the whole realme, in maner into his only hands.[28]

This summative assessment of Wolsey's fatal flaw—his inability to work positively within the Church and state without turning those good deeds to reinforce his pride—does acknowledge that Wolsey did do some good. Indeed, the 1577 *Chronicles* lament Wolsey's pride as being the chief barrier to what otherwise could have been a very positive administration. The author goes on to elaborate on Wolsey's deeds as Lord Chancellor; by way of example, he includes a summary of Wolsey's unconventional doings within the law courts:

> It was a straunge matter to see, a man not skilled in the lawes to sit in the seat of iudgement to pronounce the law, being ayded at the first by such as according to the auncient custome, dyd sit as associate with him but he would not sticke to determine sundrie causes, neyther rightly derided nor adiudged by order of law, and againe suche as were cleare cases, hee would sometime prohibite the same to passe, call them into iudgement frame an order in controuersies, and punish such as came with vntrue surmises, afore the Iudges, and sharply reproue the negligence of the Iudges themselues, whiche had receyued such surmises, and not well considered of the controuersies of the parties. . . . Hee ordeyned by the kings Commission, diuerse vnder Courtes, to heare complaynts by byll of poore men, that they might the sooner come by iustice.[29]

Wolsey's uncompromising tendency to cut through bureaucracy and his efforts to make justice more accessible to all strata of society here seem very positive. Holinshed goes on to explain how this common-sensical and direct approach

28 Holinshed, 1577 ed., 1498–1499.

29 Holinshed, 1577 ed., 1498–1499.

was turned to feed Wolsey's pride and ambitions, and was not based on a fundamental desire to see justice done more ably:

> And such was the administration of the Cardinall vnder a colour of Iustice at the first: but bycause the same seemed at length to be but a verie shadow or colour in deed, it quickly vanished away, he taking vpon him the whole rule himself, for that he saw how the king made small account of any other but onely of him. Whereby it came to passe that many of the Peeres and high estates of the realme withdrew them from the Court, as first the Archbishop of Canterburie, and the Byshop of Winchester, which got them home into their Diocesses, but yet before their departure, as good fathers of their Countrey, they instantlye besought the king, that he woulde not suffer any seruant to exceede and passe his maister, borowing that sentence out of the Gospell of Saint Iohn, where our Sauiour speaking to his disciples sayth to them, Verily, verily, I say vnto you the seruant is not greater than his master. Herevnto the king knowing that they ment this by the Cardinal, made this answere, that he would diligently see that euery seruaunt shoulde obey and not commaund.[30]

Holinshed's purpose in including these rather substantial editorialized passages is made clear in this excerpt. The reader is told that the outcome of Wolsey's efforts to make justice more accessible and to apply the law more evenly regardless of the social status of the defendant was not a more commendable legal system; instead, Wolsey abandoned reform in favor of consolidating power. Nor, the author writes, was that particularly the desired end result: his reforms were made only "under a colour of justice" and were meant to only give the impression of genuine reform. Wolsey had consolidated his hold on substantial portions of the English government by forcing out competitors and taking as many of the king's tasks away from Henry as possible, tedious responsibilities that the young monarch was only too happy to abrogate. But Holinshed continues to show the effects of this overreliance on Wolsey; many of the highest peers and ecclesiastics in the kingdom withdrew from court, not without lodging complaints with Henry VIII first. It is also noted that the archbishop of Canterbury (already praised as a good example of a prelate) and the bishop of Winchester acted as "good fathers" to the nation and risked the king's ire by reminding him of St John's lesson regarding the proper place of servants. This Biblical reminder is included to juxtapose good ecclesiastic leaders against Wolsey to highlight further the cardinal's negative qualities. This

30 Holinshed, 1577 ed., 1498–1499.

focus on the cardinal's pride is made clearer when we juxtapose it with the eulogistic description of the fall of Thomas Cromwell:

> Other who knew nothing but truth by him, both lamented him, and heartilie praied for him. But this is true, that of certeine of the cleargie he was detestablie hated, and speciallie such as had borne swinge and by his meanes were put from it: for in déed he was a man that in all his dooings seemed not to fauor anie kind of poperie, nor could not abide the snuffing pride of some prelats, which vndoubtedlie (whatsoeuer else was the cause of his death) did sho[r]ten his life, and procured the end that he was brought vnto[.][31]

The most striking difference between these two passages is the focus on personal vainglory versus a hatred of pride. These two men, both born of common stock and who both rose to largely govern England and fall suddenly from power are set up as diametrically opposite, with one being proud and the other abhorring pride.

Holinshed's Wolsey is thus not without some virtues: he aggressively pursued criminals irrespective of who he might offend, and he cut through the legal bureaucracy to bring justice even to poor men and to rebuke negligent judges. Holinshed admits as much, and states plainly that these deeds were worthy of commendation; however, Wolsey's virtues could have been far more praiseworthy if they had not been born out of or overwhelmed by his negative qualities. By constructing these compliments in the form of a paromologia, Holinshed marks Wolsey's failings as all the more galling. Paromologia, "the figure of partial admission; a strategy in debate in which minor points are conceded to an adversary in order to strengthen one's own position" is not a regularly occurring technique in the Wolsey episodes; unlike the paromologia of the 'color of justice' anecdote, the more usual figure is a species of narrative parrhesia (candour, frankness; outspokenness or boldness of speech) when Holinshed appears as though he candidly presents the anecdote and, if he feels it particularly noteworthy, interjects an element of editorialization through a parenthesis (either in the text or as a marginal comment) or more straightforward adjectival modification.[32]

If we consider the marked use of particular rhetorical schemes and tropes, there is another episode that is doubly significant by virtue both of its use of paromologia and the dramatic content of the anecdote. The only other

31 Fleming, 1587 ed., 951.

32 *OED*, "paramologia" and "parrhesia."

paromologia that appears in the Wolsey anecdotes (in the 1577 edition) is the very last anecdote to feature Wolsey: immediately following the death of the cardinal, Holinshed provides a eulogistic summary of Wolsey's life, qualities, and career largely drawn from Edmund Campion's 1571 *History of Ireland*. Of course, with Campion's strong Catholic sympathies a certain pro-Wolsey (or pro-Catholic) bias would be understandable; however, even Holinshed's edited quotation from Campion utilizes paromologia to create a more three-dimensional Wolsey:

> This Cardinall, as Edmonde Campion in his historie of Ireland describeth him, was a man vndoubtedly borne to honor: I thinke (sayth he) some Princes basterd no Butchers sonne, exceeding wise, faire spoken, high minded, full of reuenge, vicious of his body, loftie to his enimies, were they neuer so bigge, to those that accepted and fought his friendship wonderfull courteous, a ripe scholeman, thrall to affections, brought a bedde with flatterie, insaciable to gette, and more princely in bestowing, as appeareth by hys two Colledges at Ipswich and Oxeford, the one ouerthrowen with his fall, the other vnfinished, and yet as it lyeth for an house of Studences, considering all the appurtenances incomparable through Christendome, wherof Henry the eigth is now called founder, bycause he let it stand. He helde and enioyed at once the Bishoprickes of Yorke, Duresme, and Winchester, the dignities of Lord Cardinal, Legate, and Chancellor, the Abbey of Saint Albo[n]s, diuers Priories, sundry fatte benefices in commendum, a greate preferrer of his seruauntes, and aduauncer of learning, stout in euery quarrell, neuer happy till this hys ouerthrow. Therein he shewed such moderation, and ended so perfectly, that the houre of his death did him more honour, than all the pomp of hys life passed.[33]

This passage provides an excellent example of antanagoge, whereby positive and negative qualities or characteristics are juxtaposed. Campion balances Wolsey's wisdom, eloquence, courtesy, loyalty, academic acumen, and generosity with his tendency toward vice, vengefulness, flattery, ambition, and arrogance.

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33 Holinshed, 1577 ed., 1555–1556. Quoted from a manuscript copy of Edmund Campion's *The Historie of Ireland* (1571), which was later published by Sir James Ware in 1633. Full reference: Edmund Campion, *Two Histories of Ireland*, ed. Sir John Ware (Dublin, 1633), 116.

By finishing with this laudatory (if not wholly complimentary) epitaph, the 1577 *Holinshed* authors leave the reader feeling that perhaps this Wolsey was not quite the "butcher's cur" that other contemporary authors had made him out to be. Holinshed thus ultimately characterizes Wolsey as a man of undeniable virtues and talents who was fundamentally unable to recognize the effects of his behavior beyond the prospect of immediate gain. One of the chief results of Wolsey's machinations was the general ill-will of the nobility. While the king's favor is effective protection against manifestations of displeasure from others, it is ultimately a short-term strategy and deeply dangerous when applied to a fickle monarch like Henry VIII. By accruing so much power and disregarding the political perils of such centralization, Wolsey left himself vulnerable as soon as Henry VIII's benevolence vanished. This characterization of Wolsey as too short-sighted and naïve for long-term political success is later reflected by authors such as Shakespeare and Fletcher in their collaborative history play *Henry VIII, or, All is True*.

Wolsey, Post-Holinshed: Abraham Fleming and the 1587 Edition

Ten years after the publication of the first edition of the *Chronicles* and seven years after the death of Raphael Holinshed, the second edition of the *Chronicles* was released. The 1587 edition had been extensively revised, expanded, and censored throughout the decade, largely due to the efforts of Abraham Fleming (c. 1552–1607), the chief editor of the second edition. Fleming, a successful printer and clergyman devoted two years (1585–1587) to expanding the *Chronicles*.[34] He was primarily responsible for updating the *Chronicles* to include information about Elizabeth's reign from 1577 to 1587, but his impact on the text was far-reaching:

> Besides procuring annals from John Stow for the years following 1577, he also obtained further material for Elizabeth's entire reign, amending omissions that Holinshed had regretted. Throughout the revision of 1587 Fleming generally introduced amendments, and particularly his own, by the symbol ¶ and concluded them with a bracket], using printed marginalia to identify the sources.[35]

34 See Cyndia Susan Clegg, "Censorship," in Heal, Archer, and Kewes, *The Oxford Handbook of Holinshed's Chronicles*.

35 *ODNB*, "Abraham Fleming."

These amendments often include passages taken directly from other chroniclers (Hall and Vergil being the most commonly cited) as well as an increase in editorial passages and marginalia. If we consider the enormous expansion of editorial marginalia in the Wolsey sections, we find that from five editorial comments about Wolsey in 1577 (4.6% of total marginal comments in the Wolsey sections), Fleming increased this number to twenty-five in 1587 (9.8% of total marginal comments in the Wolsey sections). In the 1577 edition, these five comments are included in reference to four separate episodes featuring Wolsey. In the 1587 edition, the twenty-five editorial comments were associated with eighteen separate episodes. These numbers clearly indicate a substantial increase not only in editorial comments, but also in single episodes featuring multiple editorial comments. A single episode which has multiple editorial comments associated with it indicates a clear authorial or editorial emphasis on that particular episode. These additions lead to a markedly increased editorial (or authorial) presence in the text, and provide a more sharply controlled steering of reader reception.

To display better how the 1587 Wolsey compares to the 1577 Wolsey, we have to match up examples previously analyzed with their 1587 counterparts. Unlike Foxe's continual revision of his *Acts and Monuments*—revision that often featured significant rewriting of episodes—the 1587 *Chronicles* contains many passages from the 1577 edition copied verbatim. However, the significant textual additions made to many of these episodes do impact on the text by means of providing additional information or analysis. In the anecdote that appeared in the 1577 edition where Wolsey becomes Lord Chancellor, we can see that the main portion of the text has not been significantly altered in the 1587 edition. However, in 1587 a short anecdote was appended that provides a specific example of the heavy-handed application of the statues of apparel:

> At the end of this parlement, doctor Warham archbishop of Canturburie, and as then lord chancellour, perceiuing how the new lord cardinall medled further in his office of chancellorship than he could well suffer, except he should aduenture the kings displeasure; for this and for other considerations gaue vp his office of chancellor into the kings hands, and deliuered to him the great seale, which incontinentlie was deliuered by the king vnto the lord cardinall, and so was he made Lord Chancellor. He was no sooner in that office, but he directed foorth commissions into euerie shire, for the execution of the statutes of apparell and labourers, and in all his dooings shewed himselfe more loftie and presumptuous than became him. *And he himselfe on a daie called a gentleman named Simon Fitz Richard, and tooke from him an old iacket of crimsin veluet and*

> *diuerse brooches, which extreame dooing caused him greatlie to be hated: and by his example manie cruell officers for malice euill intreated diuerse of the kings subiects, in so much that one Shinning, maior of Rochester, set a yoong man on the pillorie for wearing of a riuen or gathered shirt.*[36]

The addition of this anecdote is not explained either by textual analysis or marginal comment, nor is it immediately obvious why it was included in the same paragraph as Wolsey's appointment as Lord Chancellor. It seems ironic that Wolsey, known and routinely savaged for his opulence in clothing, would require someone to surrender an "old" jacket and a number of brooches in keeping with the sumptuary laws which governed clothing. That Wolsey is hypocritical and overzealous in his application of the law seems to be Fleming's opinion, as he calls it "extreame." However, it is not purely for the deed itself that Fleming included this anecdote, demonstrative as it is. This episode was included to show how Wolsey's hypocritical actions set a negative example which other men followed. As the passage tells the reader, Wolsey's actions led others to acts of "malice": in this case, a mayor of Rochester who set a man in the pillory—a humiliating and dangerous corporal punishment—for wearing an apparently ostentatious shirt. These actions were seen by Fleming not merely as shocking or discreditable to the cardinal (and those who imitated him), but were in fact evil and reflected the lack of moral rectitude that Wolsey displayed and others aped.

The most obvious difference between the 1577 edition and the 1587 edition is expansion, as the above excerpt has illustrated. Fleming sought not so much to rewrite Holinshed's earlier work (though considerable efforts were made to change spelling and manipulate various typographical features) as he attempted to elaborate further on Holinshed's themes by adding a either substantial editorialization or a wealth of detail.[37] The difference between the 1577 edition and 1587 edition becomes clear when we compare the two versions of the episode featuring the reception of Wolsey's cardinal's hat. The 1577 edition is a short statement that Wolsey's hat was received with the utmost pomp in November 1516 and that Wolsey saw himself as the "perfite" cardinal once he had received it: thus missing the true meaning of the hat as a symbol of holiness. The 1587 edition contains the same factual information, but a supplementary explanatory anecdote is interjected at the beginning of the excerpt,

36 Fleming, 1587 ed., 837; emphasis indicates additional material.

37 From "The Making of the Chronicles," <http://www.cems.ox.ac.uk/holinshed/chronicles.shtml>.

and a substantial editorial passage has been appended at the end. First we consider the explanatory anecdote:

> In the end of Nouember, the Cardinals hat was sent into England, which the gentlemen of Kent receiued, and brought to London with such triumph, as though the greatest prince in Europe had béene come to visit the king [*much like that of the people at Rome in the yeare 1515, when were séene in the said citie two elephants, a nature of creatures which happilie had not béene séene in Italie since the triumphs and publike plaies of the Romans. Emanuell king of Portingall sent to pope Leo the tenth a verie honorable ambassage, and withall presented him with these huge and statelie elephants, which his ships had brought by sea from India; their entring into Rome was celebrated with a verie great concourse of people, some woondering at the strange forme and stature of the beasts, some maruelling to what vses their nature inclined them, and some coniecturing the respects and purposes of such a present, their ignorance making their woonder farre greater than their reason.*][38]

This interpolated anecdote about Manuel I of Portugal's gift of two elephants to Pope Leo X serves to explain the reaction of the English to the spectacle centered on the reception of Wolsey's *galero.* The people of England—like the Romans ogling the elephants—reveal their ignorance through their speculation about the reason for this magnificent spectacle; they do not understand why the *galero* was given to Wolsey, merely that if it received such a spectacular reception, then it must have warranted that reception. Fleming continues on to explain the import of Holinshed's earlier material:

> No lesse adoo was there at the bringing of the Cardinals hat, who on a sundaie (in S. Peters church at Westminster) receiued the same, with the habit, the piller, and other such tokens of a cardinall. And now that he was thus a perfect cardinall, he looked aboue all estates, which purchased him great hatred and disdaine on all sides. *For his ambition was no lesse discernable to the eies of the people, than the sunne in the firmament in a cléere and cloudlesse summer daie; which procured against him the more hatred among the noble and popular sort; for that his base linage was both noted and knowne, in so much that his insatiable aspiring to supereminent degrees of dignitie kindled manifest contempt and detestation among such as pretended a countenance of good will and honorable dutie vnto him,*

38 Fleming, 1587 ed., 837; emphasis indicates additional material.

> *though in verie deed the same parties* (*if fréelie and without checke they might haue spoken their fansie*) *would haue intituled him a proud popeling; as led with the like spirit of swelling ambition, wherwith the rable of popes haue béene bladder like puffed and blowne vp: a diuelish and luciferian vice, in the iudgements of men abhominable, and in the sight of God most damnable; as the poet in this distichon trulie witnesseth:*
>
> *Dij superi fastum, fastum mortales abhorrent,*
> *Hac homini leuitas displicet atque Deo.*[39]

As we can see in the italicized portion, this episode is expanded substantially, with Fleming explaining that Wolsey's pride was obvious even to the meanest understanding, and through that pride, the nobility came to hate him all the more. Fleming finishes by injecting some vitriolic Protestant polemic into this anecdote in order to steer readers toward a more harshly critical view of Wolsey specifically and the Roman Church more broadly. This is a distinct departure from Holinshed's more general tactic of portraying Wolsey not as exclusively emblematic of the Roman Church, but instead as having betrayed the spirit of Christianity more generally. Fleming constructs his link between Wolsey and the Roman Church by alleging that if the people of England (both base and noble) were able to speak freely, they would denounce the cardinal as a "proud popeling," being akin to the "puffed-up" popes by reason of their shared "deuelish and luciferian vice," pride. Using tautologies like "deuelish and luciferian vice" and "puffed and blowne up" and alliterations like "proud popeling" lends a strong air of dramatic hyperbole to the editorial and reinforces Fleming's editorial opinion that these features made Wolsey "in the sight of God most damnable." However, these hyperbolic editorial comments are not indicative of Fleming's standard approach; more commonly, the 1587 *Chronicles* are expanded by providing more episode-specific detail.

This detail-oriented approach is clear in numerous expanded passages; in particular, Fleming reliably includes more descriptive detail in reporting significant political events, whereas Holinshed often restricted the 1577 edition to a succinct mention of the event without elaboration. When Cardinal Campeggio was commissioned by Pope Leo X to travel to England to urge Henry VIII to war with the Turks, the 1577 edition provided the following report:

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39 "Both gods above and mortal men abhor this pomp / This levity displeases man and God." Fleming, 1587 ed., 837. Italics added for contrast.; emphasis indicates additional material.

> This yeare came to Calais from Pope Leo, a Legate de Latere called Laurence Campeius borne in Bologna la Grasse, commonly called Cardinall Campeggio, to require the king of ayde agaynst the Turke.
>
> . . . so that then Cardinall Campeius, after he had remayned at Calays three Monethes, came ouer into Englande, and was receyued with all pompe and honoure that myghte bee deuised: for hys friendshippe shewed in helpyng the Cardinall of Englande to the Bishoprike of Bathe, hee was considered (besyde other rewards) wyth the Byshoprike of Salisburie, the profites wherof hee receyued tyll the acte was established, that no forreyner shoulde enioy anye spirituall benefice within this Realme. But for the chiefest errand, that this Cardinall Campeis came, he coulde haue no towarde aunswere, whiche was, to haue leuyed a summe of money by waye of tenthes in thys Realme, to the mainteinaunce of the warre in defence of the Christian confines agaynste the Turke.
>
> . . . so that Campeuis hearing that it tooke not place in other partyes, left off his earnest suyte about it, and with great rewardes receyued of the King and Cardinall, returned to Rome, not wythoute hope yet (by reason of promises made to him by hys friends,) that the Popes request might hereafter be graunted according to his motion.[40]

Campeggio's attempts to convince Henry VIII to contribute to the pope's war had little concrete impact on European politics, as he grew discouraged by a general lack of success among his peers in their similar embassies to other European monarchs. However, Holinshed reports that Campeggio still earned himself a rich benefice (the bishopric of Salisbury) as reward for his efforts. Beyond this particular fact, there is little in the way of concrete information: from this anecdote, we can determine that Campeggio, born in Bologna, came to England to ask Henry VIII to tax his nation by 10 percent to fund a war against the Turks. He expected help because of his recent efforts to secure the bishopric of Bath for Wolsey. However, Henry VIII was unwilling to commit, and since few other European monarchs were being generous, the entire mission was cancelled. Despite this, Campeggio was richly rewarded, with the implication that Wolsey felt it appropriate to maintain goodwill with the pope and his 'friend' Campeggio.

By contrast, the 1587 edition contains much more information about Campeggio's arrival and Wolsey's participation in the papal embassy. Fleming provides a linear structuring of the events from Campeggio's arrival until his departure (most notable being the embarrassing affair with the garbage-laden

40 Holinshed, 1577 ed., 1504.

mules borrowed from Foxe). Instead of concisely stating the facts (broadly speaking) of Campeggio's arrival as the 1577 edition did, Fleming spied an opportunity to develop his Wolsey character:

> At the request of the king of England, and also of the French king (which sought now to be receiued into fréendship with the king of England chéeflie by cardinall Woolsies meanes) pope Leo constituted the said cardinall Woolsie his legat in England, ioining him in commission with the said Campeggio, the which staid at Calis vntill the bulles were brought from Rome touching that matter. There was also another cause that staid Campeggio at Calis, & that was a sute which cardinall Woolsie had mooued for the obteining of the bishoprike of Bath. . . .
>
> . . . cardinall Campeggio, at the instance of cardinall Woolsie, wrote to the pope, that cardinall Adrian might be depriued of that bishoprike to the end that cardinall Woolsie might haue the same. Which request was accomplished, and the bulles sent vnto Calis; so that then cardinall Campeggio, after he had remained at Calis thrée moneths, came ouer into England, and was receiued with all pompe & honour that might be deuised. Insomuch that cardinall Woolsie had sent to the legat (whilest he laie at Calis) red cloth to cloath his seruants, which at their comming to Calis were but meanelie apparelled. And when all things were readie, he passed the sea and landed at Douer; and so kept foorth his iournie toward London.[41]

Despite a superficial lack of discursive characterization, the straightforward prose actually acts as a convincing vehicle for conveying a rather unflattering portrait of Wolsey. If we examine the basic facts Fleming is attempting to convey, Wolsey emerges looking distinctly manipulative and petty. First, Wolsey uses his influence with Henry VIII and Francis I to pressure Pope Leo X into naming him as a legate coequal with Campeggio, though there is no apparent reason why there should be two papal legates in England, particularly as Wolsey had no connection with Campeggio's mission. Furthermore, Campeggio was compelled to wait in Calais for three months while messengers were sent to Rome to petition Leo X to acquiesce to Wolsey's request, while they negotiated that request, and while they brought the sought-after papal bull to England. Finally, when Campeggio was permitted to cross over the Channel, Wolsey sent him red cloth with which to clothe his servants, as they apparently did not meet Wolsey's standards. Of course, these details are not unequivocally negative:

41 Fleming, 1587 ed., 845.

they could demonstrate Wolsey's generosity, or the importance he placed on maintaining the image of the Church. Yet there is no editorial guidance offered in the text: Fleming, having noted that Wolsey received Campeggio with "all pompe and honour that might be devised," allows the reader to draw his own conclusions.

These details, written in a straightforward style devoid of overt editorialization, work in conjunction with occasional hyperbolic editorials to contribute toward the characterization of Wolsey as a deeply flawed man. If Fleming had loaded this anecdote with vicious, adjective-laden rants supplemented with critical marginal comments, as Foxe occasionally does, it would be easy to dismiss this characterization as exclusively polemical, with little factual grounds for genuine criticism. By avoiding such polemical stereotypes, Fleming uses a more subtle approach to convey the same message.

Not all of the 1587 edition's expansions were devoted to clear anti-Wolsey rhetoric; Fleming's editorial decision to include more descriptive passages in the 1587 edition could allow for a relatively objective assessment of how Wolsey conducted his public appearances. In the next excerpt, which follows on from Campeggio's arrival in England to describe his entry into London and subsequent activities in Henry VIII's court, we are given a window onto an extraordinarily vivid scene in which Wolsey and Campeggio make their way into Henry VIII's presence:

> About thrée of the clocke in the after noone on the twentie ninth day of Iulie the said legat entered the citie, and in Southworke met him all the clergie of London, with crosses, censors, and copes, and censed him with great reuerence. The maior and aldermen, with all the occupations of the citie in their best liueries stood in the stréets, and him highlie honoured: to whome sir Thomas More made a bréefe oration in the name of the citie.
>
> Now when he came to Paules, there he was receiued with bishops mitred, and vnder a canopie entered the church: which canopie his seruants tooke for their fees. And when he had offered, he gaue his benediction to all the people, & tooke againe his mule, & so with all his traine aforesaid was conueied to Bath place, and there rested: where he was welcommed of cardinall of Yorke. On sundaie next insuing, these two cardinals as legats tooke their barges, & came to Gréenewich, ech of them had besides their crosses two pillers of siluer, two little axes gilt, and two cloake-bags embrodered, & the Cardinals hats borne before them. And when they came to the kings hall, the Cardinall of Yorke went on the right hand: and there the king roiallie apparelled and accompanied, met them

> euen as though both had come from Rome and so brought them both vp into his chamber of presence.[42]

The rich detail of the joint procession of Campeggio and Wolsey could arguably have been intended as a bulwark to reinforce Fleming's characterization of Wolsey as a prelate obsessed with his own grandiosity. However, it seems unlikely that contemporary readers would have seen this passage as an exclusive example of Wolsey's pride, even for a figure so often lampooned and criticized for his focus on spectacle. Cardinals were princes of the Roman Church and were invested with enormous and wide-ranging powers, with influence over both the temporal and spiritual worlds. For any cardinal to travel to meet a monarch it would be expected that they would present themselves in a grand style, displaying the wealth and power at their disposal. In particular, for a legate *a latere*, a cardinal invested with the power to make decisions on behalf of the pope himself, to meet a significant European monarch and a fellow cardinal and coequal legate who was a major figure in European politics (possibly with an eye on the papal throne itself) required the production of an appropriately spectacular reception to reflect the power and glory of the participants. It therefore is essential that modern readers not suppose that all Fleming's details about the elaborate procession of Wolsey and Campeggio through London were manipulated to reflect poorly on either of these men or the institution they served, nor that all the inferences made by the editors would have unanimously chimed with their readership.

Whatever his motivations, by providing more detail Fleming and his assistants turned Holinshed's 1577 *Chronicles* from an admirable and ambitious framework occasionally lacking in specifics into a significantly richer and denser text. Just as Fleming enriched the account of Campeggio's arrival in England by including specific details, so too did he with many aspects of Wolsey's life. Toward the end of 1529, following Wolsey's being deprived of the Great Seal (and thus his office as Lord Chancellor), his estate was inventoried: first by Wolsey's own officers and then by agents of Henry VIII. Holinshed provided a summative passage in the 1577 edition, but was more concerned with the general effect of the events and not the specific details of the investigation itself:

> And further the.xvij. of Nouember the King sent the two Dukes of Norfolke and Suffolke to the Cardinalles place at Westminster, to fetche away the greate Seale of Englande, Sir William Fitz William knighte of the Garter

42 Fleming, 1587 ed., 845.

> and Treasorer of his house, and doctor Stephen Gardiner newely made Secretarie, were also sent to see that no goodes shoulde be conueyed out of his house. The Cardinall him selfe was appointed to remoue vnto Ashere, besyde Kingston, there to tary the kings pleasure, and had things necessarie deliuered vnto hym for his vse.[43]

The 1577 account states the key points of the events, but does not provide information on how these events transpired. There is little in the way of imagery or characterization; Wolsey appears only to hand over the Great Seal and to be ordered to leave London without removing his belongings from the city. By contrast, the 1587 account is far richer in detail. It begins by recounting indirect speech between Wolsey and the dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk, sent by Henry VIII to deprive Wolsey of the Great Seal:

> And further, the seuentéenth of Nouember the king sent the two dukes of Norffolke and Suffolke to the Cardinals place at Westminster, who (went as they were commanded) and finding the Cardinall there, they declared that the kings pleasure was that he should surrender vp the great seale into their hands, and to depart simplie vnto Asher, which was an house situat nigh vnto Hampton court, belonging to the bishoprike of Winchester. The cardinall demanded of them their commission that gaue them such authoritie, who answered againe, that they were sufficient commissioners, and had authoritie to doo no lesse by the kings mouth. Notwithstanding, he would in no wise agrée in that behalfe, without further knowledge of their authoritie, saieng; that the great seale was deliuered him by the kings person, to inioy the ministration thereof, with the roome of the chancellor for the terme of his life whereof for his suertie he had the kings letters patents.
>
> This matter was greatlie debated betwéene them with manie great words, in so much that the dukes were faine to depart againe without their purpose, and rode to Windsore to the king, and made report accordinglie; but the next daie they returned againe, bringing with them the kings letters. Then the ca[r]dinall deliuered vnto them the great seale, and was content to depart simplie, taking with him nothing but onelie certeine prouision for his house: and after long talke betwéene him and the dukes, they departed with the great seale of England, and brought the same to the king.

43 Holinshed, 1577 ed., 1552.

This excerpt is essential to Fleming's construction of Wolsey because it gives the reader what appears to be an eyewitness account (certainly an account that wishes to be taken as first- or second-hand) by virtue of the indirect speech recorded as having passed between the dukes and Wolsey. Reported speech is rare in the *Chronicles*, in either the 1577 or 1587 editions, and when it is included it lends an air of authenticity to the passage.

Enhanced by these editorial bulwarks, Fleming's Wolsey character stands in sharp contrast to the dukes: Wolsey rides roughshod over the demands of the two most powerful noblemen in England—who were most certainly empowered by the king to recover the Great Seal—and sends the two dukes back to Windsor to obtain a written warrant for the Great Seal. Wolsey, though a commoner, evidently had such force of personality (whether borne out of pride or an innate strength of character) that he was able to overrule the preeminent peers of the realm even as he was being deprived of his most significant office. Regardless of Fleming's personal intentions regarding his editorialization of Wolsey's public image, the 1587 *Chronicles* portrays Wolsey as an exceptional figure, with a personality to match his grandiose lifestyle.

It is Wolsey's selfsame opulent life that is apparent in the next part of this anecdote. After Wolsey surrendered the Great Seal to Norfolk and Suffolk, he immediately ordered his household to account for all his belongings (assumedly to demonstrate both his financial honesty and to have a personal record of his estate to compare against the forthcoming official inventory). Fleming catalogues the result, an overwhelming display of wealth from the richest man in the kingdom:

> Then the Cardinall called all his officers before him, and tooke accompt of them for all such stuffe, whereof they had charge. And in his gallerie were set diuerse tables, wherevpon laie a great number of goodlie rich stuffe, as whole péeces of silke of all colours, veluet, sattin, damaske, taffata, grograine, and other things. Also, there laie a thousand peeces of fine Holland cloth.
>
> There was laid on euerie table, bookes reporting the contents of the same, and so was there inuentaries of all things in order against the kings comming. He caused to be hanged the walles of the gallerie on the one side with cloth of gold, cloth of tissue, cloth of siluer, and rich cloth of bodken of diuerse colours. On the other side were hanged the richest sute of coapes of his owne prouision made for his colleges of Oxford and Ipswich, that euer were séene in England. Then had he two chambers adioining to the gallerie, the one most commonlie called the gilt chamber, and the other the councell chamber, wherein were set vp two broad

> and long tables vpon trestles, whervpon was set such a number of plate of all sorts, as was almost incredible.
>
> In the gilt chamber were set out vpon the table nothing but gilt plate, and vpon a cupbord and in a window was set no plate but gold, verie rich: and in the councell chamber was all white and parcell gilt plate, and vnder the table in baskets was all old broken siluer plate, and bookes set by them purporting euerie kind of plate, and euerie parcell, with the contents of the ounces thereof.[44]

As if to undercut positive associations the reader may have had following Wolsey's self-assured conduct toward the dukes of Suffolk and Norfolk, Fleming includes this meticulous account of Wolsey's officers taking inventory of the cardinal's possessions. The wealth displayed in these three paragraphs is enormous, particularly as it only represents the easily mobile and readily available portion of Wolsey's estate. It does not factor in the extensive lands, benefices, rents, and other items that Wolsey drew from his plurality of bishoprics, government posts, gifts, and other sources of income. Though this list is included as a way of demonstrating the opulence of the cardinal, the tone of the passage is not condemnatory. Wolsey's wealth is itemized in a tone of wonder that is imparted to the reader by phrases like "ever were seen in England" (referring to the splendor of the robes Wolsey had specially made for the fellows of his college at Oxford) and "no plate but gold." The details of the cardinal's cloth ("whole p[i]eces of silk of all colours, veluet, damaske, taffata, grogaine, and other things") evoke Cavendish's meticulous descriptions of Wolsey's wealth in his *Life*. The reader is invited to share in Fleming's sense of awe at the staggering wealth Wolsey has laid out with phrases like "as was almost incredible." The anecdote finishes by recounting Wolsey's final preparations and his ensuing removal to Asher:

> Thus were all things prepared, giuing charge of all the said stuffe, with all other remaining in euerie office, to be deliuered to the king, to make answer to their charge: for the order was such, that euerie officer was charged with the receipt of the stuffe belonging to his office by indenture. To sir William Gascoigne, being his treasuror, he gaue the charge of the deliuerie of the said goods, and therwithall, with his traine of gentlemen and yeomen, he tooke his barge at the priuie staires, and so went by water vnto Putneie, where when he was arriued, he tooke his mule, & euerie man tooke their horsses, and rode streight to Asher, where he and

44 Fleming, 1587 ed., 909.

> his familie continued the space of three or foure weekes, without either beds, shéets, table cloths, or dishes to eat their meat in, or wherwith to buie anie: the Cardinall was forced to borow of the bishop of Carleill, plate and dishes, &c.[45]

The particularly interesting part of this excerpt comes right at the end; Wolsey, having been forced to remove himself and his household to Asher, arrives to find that his new home was not furnished. As a result, he was obliged to beg basic house-wares from the bishop of Carlisle. Taken out of context, this anecdote does not appear to be particularly important. There is no strident invective holding up Wolsey's actions as indicative of moral decay, nor are there any accusatory or demonstrative marginal comments. However, this anecdote is quite an effective one in that it subtly presents both a deeply satirical image of Wolsey and a morally instructive *de casibus* moment: the once great cardinal, who was so accustomed to eating from the gold plate listed in the earlier portion of the episode, is now forced to live without the most basic furniture and is compelled to go begging to John Kite, bishop of Carlisle for dishes from which to eat.

One of the primary ways in which Fleming gathered his facts was to include extracts and details from texts published by previous early modern chroniclers, both from England and continental Europe. The works of Edward Hall, John Foxe, Francesco Guiccardini, and Polydore Vergil all were all utilized extensively by Fleming and his assistants. This approach is made clear chiefly by the appearance of nearly identical excerpts from these earlier texts, which are often signaled by marginal citations. Fleming incorporates nearly verbatim one of the most remarkable events reported in Hall's *Chronicle*, which also features memorably in John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*: namely, the episode in which the mule train Wolsey has lent to Campeggio overturns, revealing the garbage hidden in the saddlebags to create a false impression of wealth. It is noticeably absent from the 1577 edition, however. It seems likely that Holinshed felt the story was too likely to be apocryphal; alternatively, he may have felt the anecdote was too polemical. It seems less feasible that Holinshed would have been unaware of the story, since he and his team had easy access to both Foxe's and Hall's texts and had made extensive use of both for information about Wolsey. Whatever the reason for Holinshed's omission, Fleming included the Foxe version nearly verbatim. As with both Foxe and Hall, the account itself is unverified; however, for Fleming (as well as Foxe and Hall), documented attestations play second fiddle to the satirical effect of the anecdote.

45 Fleming, 1587 ed., 909.

The allegorical import is plain enough: the mules, ostensibly meant as symbols of Christ-like humility, lose their humble import by virtue of their being bedecked with red cloth. Their coffers, which are meant to hold the physical treasure and symbols of power of the visiting legate instead are stuffed with garbage. The outward glory of the cardinals hides the rot within, or so Fleming (by way of Hall) alleges.

The shift in focus from the 1577 *Chronicles* to the 1587 is then perhaps indicated most clearly by episodes like the one previous: whereas the 1577 edition cast Wolsey's actions and perceived dissimulations in a generic "bad adviser" topos, the 1587 edition uses Wolsey in a manner more similar to the more openly polemical Foxe. There is a degree of differentiation between Fleming's approach and Foxe's, as evidenced most clearly in their respective accounts of Wolsey's death. The arrest and death of Wolsey in the 1587 edition is a much more significant affair than in the 1577 edition. Like much of the 1587 edition, it features significant expansion; in this case, these two sections contain the largest textual increases relating to Wolsey. Wolsey's arrest and death, and its subsequent editorialization balloons from a brief 22 lines in 1577 to a much more detailed 497 lines. Naturally, this massive expansion completely altered the tenor of the death of Wolsey. The 1577 edition is relatively terse, leaving most of the editorializing to Campion, as we have seen above:

> The Earle according to that commaundemente, came with a conuenient number vnto the manor of Cawood, where the Cardinall as then lay, and arrested hym there in his owne chamber the fourth of Nouember, and from thence conueyd hym the sixth of Nouember vnto Shefield Castell, and there delyuered hym vnto the Earle of Shrewesbury, who kept him, till Sir William Kingston, Captayne of the gard, and Connestable of the Tower, came downe with a certayne companye of yeomen of the gard, to fetche hym to the Tower, who receyuing hym at the handes of the Earle of Shrewesbury, diseased as hee was in his body, occasioned through sorrowe and griefe of mynde, brought hym forwarde with soft and easie iourneys, til hee came to the Abbey of Leicester the seauen and twentith of Nouember, where through verye feoblenesse of nature, caused by a vehemente laske,[46] hee dyed the seconde nyghte after, and in the Churche of the same Abbey was buryed.
>
> Suche is the suretie of mans brittle state, vncertayne in birthe, and no lesse feoble in lyfe.[47]

46 "Looseness of the bowels, diarrhœa; an attack of this". *OED*, "laske."

47 Holinshed, 1577 ed., 1555.

The 1577 edition relies largely on Campion's epitaph to provide a summative commentary on Wolsey's life, and the result is that the reader comes away with a sense of a flawed man having made a good end. By contrast, the 1587 edition was expanded enormously with a much more detailed, nominally factual recitation of the events leading to the death and with a much greater effort to provide a moral commentary on Wolsey's life for the reader. Fleming provides a chronological summary of events, beginning with Wolsey's removal to Asher and detailing how the earl of Northumberland and Walter Walsh (a privy councilor) arrested Wolsey for treason, before moving on to Wolsey's progression south, final sickness, and death at Leicester Abbey. The level of detail and lack of overt editorialization lend this passage an air of authenticity, particularly as Wolsey demonstrates his capacity for good manners:

> At the last one escaped, who shewed the Cardinall that the earle was in the hall. Whereat the Cardinall maruelled, and would not beléeue him, but commanded a gentleman to bring him the truth, who going downe the staires, saw the earle of Northumberland, and returned, and said it was verie he. Then (quoth the Cardinall) I am sorie that we haue dined, for I feare our officers be not prouided of anie store of good fish to make him some honorable chéere, let the table stand (quoth he). With that he rose vp, and going downe the staires, he encountered the earle comming vp with all his taile. And as soone as the Cardinall espied the earle, he put off his cap, and said, My lord ye be most hartilie welcome, and so imbraced each other.[48]

Though Wolsey, conscious of his duties as host, is concerned that he cannot feed the earl and his men, the cardinal's insistence on protocol strains the incident when he refuses to be arrested by the earl unless he will show his commission to do so. As the commission apparently details information Henry did not wish Wolsey to see, the earl refuses and the impasse is only ended when Wolsey surrenders to Walsh on the grounds that Walsh explicitly represents the king, in his role as privy councilor. This account of Wolsey's death differs little from Cavendish's and records Wolsey's final exchanges with Sir William Kingston, which further discredits Foxe's tale of unholy winds and midnight burials. The anecdote in the 1587 edition ends with a summary of the moral lesson to be learned:

48 Fleming, 1587 ed., 915.

> Here is the end and fall of pride and arrogancie of men exalted by fortune to dignitie: for in his time he was the hautiest man in all his procéedings aliue, hauing more respect to the honor of his person, than he had to his spirituall profession, wherin should be shewed all meekenes, humilitie, and charitie. [An example (saith Guicciardin, who handleth this storie effectuallie, and sheweth the cause of this cardinals ruine) in our daies woorthie of memorie, touching the power which fortune and enuie hath in the courts of princes.] He died in Leicester abbeie, & in the church of the same abbeie was buried. Such is the suertie of mans brittle state, doubtfull in birth, & no lesse féeble in life, which is as vncerteine, as death most certeine, and the meanes thereof manifold, which as in number they excéed so in strangenesse they passe: all degrees of ages & diuersities of sexes being subiect to the same. In consideration whereof, it was notablie said by one that wrote a whole volume of infirmities, diseases, and passions incident to children:
>
> A primo vitae diuersos stamine morbos
> Perpetimur, diris affirmúrque malis:
> Donec in occasum redeat qui vixit ab ortu,
> Antea quàm discat viuere, vita cadit.[49]

In this passage Fleming makes clear the purpose for which this additional material has been included by means of a descriptive marginal comment: "Example of pride and arrogancie."[50] In the text itself Fleming uses parentheses to not only tell readers how Wolsey was "An example . . . in our daies woorthie of memorie, touching the power which fortune and enuie hath in the courts of princes," but also to reinforce his reasoning with a statement that Francesco Guicciardini concurs and provides a similar handling of the story in his own 1540 *Storia d'Italia*.

Wolsey's death in the 1577 and 1587 editions acts as a metonym for the differences between the two editions. The 1577 version was considerably briefer (approximately one million words shorter, according to the Holinshed Project team), and while it contained an element—often a strong element—of editorialization overseen by Raphael Holinshed, the diverse views of the three

49 "From life's first thread we bear diverse afflictions / and by frightful evils are we tried: / Till he who lived at sunset turns from sunrise / Before the life he learned to live should die." Fleming, 1587 ed., 917.

50 Fleming, 1587 ed., 917.

main contributors necessitated a lack of contentious sectarian material.[51] By contrast, Abraham Fleming had much more far-reaching control over the production of the 1587 edition, particularly after the sections by his colleague Francis Thynne were heavily censored by order of the Privy Council.[52] Fleming's methodology and intentions were significant: as we have seen, there were enormous expansions on some of the most memorable anecdotes, foremost among these being Wolsey's arrest and death in 1530. These expansions alter the content and impact of the characterizations of Wolsey so significantly that it is essential to distinguish between the two editions.

To "frankelie and boldlie speak": Methods and Concerns

The initial edition, though produced chiefly by Holinshed, was heavily reliant not only on the works of chroniclers who had gone before (Hall and Vergil chief among them), but also on the efforts of a substantial team of assistants, contributors, printers, and editors. With contributors ranging from fervent Protestants to sainted Catholic martyrs, the 1577 *Chronicles* provides a patchwork collection of images and editorials of Wolsey, with Holinshed's editorial hand providing a guiding element of cohesion. These varying viewpoints are less closely aligned with a specific sectarian interest and result in a characterization of Wolsey distinct from that of previous chroniclers like Foxe or Hall. Unlike the polemics of Foxe and Bale or the inescapably Reformist writings of Hall, the 1577 edition did not seek to use Wolsey as an exegetical exercise for condemning the Roman Church, but instead focuses more specifically on Wolsey's domestic impact and personal failings. This (relative) increase in fact-based reporting of events was at odds with the general Tudor and Elizabethan trend toward Erasmian *copia*, which colored virtually all English early modern writing. Although writers like Sir Philip Sidney warned fellow writers that care must be taken when using amplifying or otherwise exaggerative rhetorical figures or tropes, it was rare to find historical accounts that did not employ substantial embellishment. Sidney in particular was skeptical about the ability of historians to provide objectivity in their works, with his ultimate praise reserved for poetry that uses history (or a poeticized version of history) to tell moral truths. As Knapp has noted, Sidney derided mere historians but was

51 For more information, see the prefatory essay, "The Making of the Chronicles," <http://www.cems.ox.ac.uk/holinshed/chronicles.shtml#two>.

52 See "The Making of the Chronicles," <http://www.cems.ox.ac.uk/holinshed/chronicles.shtml#two>. See also "Thynne, Francis (1545?–1608)," in *ODNB*.

well aware of the confluence between the two genres.[53] The 1577 *Chronicles* represent an attempt to provide something different from the more poetic or polemic histories: though it had obvious limitations, it did provide a multifaceted image of Wolsey when other historians (for various reasons) did not.

In a similar fashion, Abraham Fleming, the chief editor responsible for the 1587 edition, made clear that he felt it essential that a responsible chronicler ought to provide a balanced view of history. In this respect, Fleming appears to have been an appropriate successor to Holinshed. Annabelle Patterson argues that Fleming's approach was inclined toward objectivity; a position first proposed (in this context) by Bale. This objectivity, according to Patterson, is only possible after a certain amount of time had been allowed to lapse between the reporting of the events and the events themselves:

> Bale's appeal to an objectivity he was himself far from exemplifying was, I argue, all the more persuasive later in the sixteenth century, when thinking persons had had longer to meditate on the intricacy of the connections between religion and politics in the reigns of four successive Tudor monarchs. It is for this reason that Abraham Fleming restates his agenda as a compact that the historian must keep if he is to earn, with Aristippus, his reputation as a secular evangelist. The compact is to "frankelie and boldlie speake" to persons of all kinds (and status) and to bear "a mind indifferentlie free, as well from hope as feare."[54]

Accepting Patterson's assessment of Fleming's goal is tempting, as it would provide both the realization of Bale's vision as well as retrospectively agreeing with (and confirming) Holinshed's edition as an earlier model of an objective history. However, an examination of the Wolsey episodes and the significant editorialization of those passages instantly reveal a potential problem with this interpretation. Fleming's attempt to "frankelie and boldlie speak" referred to his efforts to steer the reader toward an understanding of English history with which Fleming would agree, free from concerns about censorship or retribution. Objectivity (in a modern sense) may never have been the goal at all: this stands in contrast to Holinshed's stated purpose in attempting to write "simple truth."[55] Though Fleming permitted contributions which espoused other opinions (certainly Campion's epitaph for Wolsey is notable in this respect), the marked increase in pro-Reformist editorials changes the tenor

53 Knapp, 175.

54 Patterson, ix.

55 Holinshed, 1577 ed., vol. 1, 4.

of the *Chronicles* significantly and brings it closer on the spectrum of early modern histories toward works like the *Acts and Monuments*. In light of this, it might be more appropriate to say that Fleming was not attempting objectivity. Instead, he was writing to reveal the truth, a far more nebulous concept and one that does not necessarily rely on the disinterested collection and reproduction of facts that 'objectivity' implies.

Fleming's opinions or goals do not necessarily dictate the reading of the 1587 edition. Fleming was certainly aware of this postproduction textual life: he included an excerpt from Hall's *Chronicle* describing how Wolsey, having misapprehended the target of a satirical play as himself imprisoned one John Roo of Gray's Inn. Hall and Foxe made much of this oversensitivity to a satire whose target may not even have been Wolsey. Fleming realized what Wolsey knew and that John Roo did not: the intentions of an author are largely inconsequential once a text has been loosed on the public.[56] To the real Wolsey, Roo's intentions were irrelevant: if members of the public interpreted Roo's play as anti-Wolsey, then it was in fact anti-Wolsey, regardless of what Roo might or might not have meant to write. To control the reception of a text an author can only attempt to anticipate the reaction of a reader (or readers in general) and adjust the tone of the narrative accordingly. The Roo anecdote demonstrates that Fleming did exactly this.

Looking Forward

Unable to rely on the authority of eyewitness testimony, as could Cavendish, and unwilling to commit to the full-scale polemical rhetoric of Foxe, both Holinshed and Fleming were nevertheless heavily reliant on texts like the *Acts and Monuments*. As both men personally specified that they were attempting to reveal truth, the clearly evidenced process of editorializing these sources (as well as the contributions of contemporary authors) in the Wolsey anecdotes indicates the centrality of the editorial process to the continuing evolution of Cardinal Wolsey's public literary image. Holinshed utilized a range of Wolsey anecdotes to provide a less unilateral condemnation of Wolsey, as demonstrated particularly aptly by his use of Campion's epitaph; however, he arranged those anecdotes so as to undercut positive details with negative ones. The resulting characterization is less hyperbolic than Foxe's, but is still strongly negative. Nor does it follow on from Cavendish's detail-rich narrative style; Holinshed's edition is characterized by comparatively brief summaries

56 Patterson, 51.

of political events, rather than the acutely detailed chronology of the *Life*. Fleming, by contrast, sought to steer the reader less subtly, by significantly expanding the emphasis placed on editorial comments, both in the text and in marginalia. Though this approach is similar to Foxe's, Fleming also revised the *Chronicles* to include significant expansions in many of the Wolsey anecdotes as part of his larger revisions of the 1577 edition.

The 1577 and 1587 *Chronicles* were not the last early modern chronicles; many followed and competed with the *Chronicles* well beyond the end of the sixteenth century. However, the popularity of these two editions in the decades immediately following publication in part placed the *Chronicles* in the hands of William Shakespeare and John Fletcher, and were heavily utilized throughout their *de casibus*-influenced *Henry VIII*. Though the *Chronicles* were not the only major history to which Shakespeare and Fletcher had access, their use of the *Chronicles* as the basis for several key scenes is well attested, as we will see in the final chapter. This reliance on the *Chronicles* demonstrates aptly how, at the end of the sixteenth century, the images of Wolsey found within chimed with a broad audience. With such a clearly defined heritage, the Wolsey of *Henry VIII* subsequently has been interpreted exclusively in a manner which would not have seemed foreign to either of the editors of the *Chronicles*, though this is not the only interpretation available to the reader or audience. Although they approach history (and thus Cardinal Wolsey) in different ways, both editions ultimately present similar images of the cardinal which helped to cement Wolsey's negative posthumous reputation.

CHAPTER 5

"Griped by Meaner Persons"?: Wolsey in Shakespeare and Fletcher's *Henry VIII or, All Is True*

After a century of various representations, the evolving literary image of Cardinal Wolsey had accumulated a wide range of features, many of which were contradictory or purely polemical. As we have seen, Wolsey has been represented in terms ranging from Skelton's obscure Biblical jabs to Foxe's polemical editorializations, and while many of the individual features faded away, a number gained currency and were passed onto the next group of characterizations. We have seen how a number of these features (like calling Wolsey a 'dog', for example) originated as generalized insults and only through repetition came to acquire more specific elements which became inextricably linked with the cardinal (calling Wolsey a "butcher's dog," if we continue with our previous example). William Shakespeare and John Fletcher's collaborative historical drama *Henry VIII, or, All Is True* provides an ideal bookend to a study of the sixteenth-century representations of the cardinal both in a chronological sense (the play was likely finished in the first decade of the seventeenth century) and in a more summative sense: Shakespeare and Fletcher drew on a century of evolving images of Wolsey to craft their own. We are thus given an opportunity to examine how these two master playwrights reflected upon Wolsey's various literary incarnations and adapted those characterizations to reflect both contemporary concerns and interests. In addition, it provides us with a chance to better understand how chroniclers like Foxe and Holinshed cemented Wolsey's negative reputation even up to the present day. Finally, this play's title reveals a fundamental concern with representations of truth, a theme that runs throughout the heart of the corpus of texts examined in this study.

Henry VIII is an often-neglected text, generally remembered for having been the play being staged when the original Globe Theatre burned down in 1613.[1] Little study has been devoted to it: Howard Felperin complained in 1966 that "that fraction of commentary on the play not worried by the academic question of who wrote it is mostly patronizing and wholly disappointing," and little has changed in the decades since, despite the appearance of Gordon McMullan's

1 Gordon McMullan, introduction to William Shakespeare and John Fletcher, *King Henry VIII* (London: Arden, 2000), 9.

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excellent Arden edition in 2000.[2] The play itself is usually characterized by its often grandiose staging—taken from the stage directions in the First Folio—which, in many ways, is exemplified by Cardinal Wolsey: his masque in 1.4 and his participation in the legatine court at Blackfriars in 2.4 are often portrayed magnificently, along with Anne Boleyn's wedding in 4.1 and Elizabeth I's baptism in 5.4. The final feature of the play that is generally recalled is the title itself: *Henry VIII, Or, All Is True*.[3] The titling of the play is potentially problematic: in many ways, the play is not about Henry VIII at all. Rather, the subtitle "All Is True" is an ironic comment on the conflict between 'real' history and the characterization of history. As we shall see, the text continually unsettles stock images of received history, and particularly those relating to Wolsey, Katherine, and Buckingham. These characterizations are drawn from historical chronicles and incorporate large sections of reported speech; as a result, the stock public understanding of many of these figures is undercut. In the play, Katherine is not merely a pious and compliant wife, the great noblemen are not chivalrous and noble magnates, and Thomas Wolsey is not (exclusively) the overproud prelate so often depicted throughout the sixteenth century. Instead of constructing this text as a good/evil morality fable, with obvious villains and heroes, this play adapts features of the Tudor *de casibus* tradition and presents the main characters as possessing flaws that eventually bring about their morally instructive falls.

Though the play is ostensibly about the iconic Henry VIII and the events leading to the birth of the future Elizabeth I, it is Cardinal Wolsey who dominates the first three acts. Wolsey's fall from power is the central structural feature of the first half of the text, on which the other characters are inextricably focused. The first scene, which features the dukes of Buckingham and Norfolk discussing with the Lord Abergavenny the recent Field of Cloth-of-gold summit, is centered on Wolsey by line 45; the cardinal goes on to dominate the discussion for nearly 200 lines until the scene ends. Wolsey appears in seven of the ten scenes to the end of Act 3; in two others (1.3 and 2.1) he is the topic of the dialogue but does not appear on stage. Only in 2.3 is Wolsey totally absent (excluding Acts 4 and 5, after Wolsey's death). No other character in the play appears with such frequency: in these same scenes, Katherine appears three times and is discussed in a further four scenes; the duke of Buckingham only

2 Howard Felperin, "Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*: History as Myth," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 6, no. 2 (1966): 225.

3 The play originally was performed as "All Is True," with the title "Henry VIII, or, All Is True" appearing in the First Folio. Numerous editors and directors—most recently Gordon McMullan—have attempted to reclaim the original title, generally with limited success.

appears twice and is mentioned once; the duke of Norfolk appears four times, and Anne Boleyn participates in two scenes and is mentioned in one other. The only figure whose presence even approaches Wolsey's is Henry himself: though he is at least discussed in all ten scenes to the end of Act 3, he only actually appears in five of these. In these three acts, Wolsey has 411 lines—the most of any character up until this point—whereas Henry has only 288: even though Wolsey does not appear in the final two acts, only Henry himself has more lines over the entire play. The impact of Wolsey's constant presence is significant, both in a specifically textual sense and as an indicator of the relevance that Wolsey still had in early Jacobean England, nearly eighty years after his death.

Of course, the manipulation of Wolsey's image was not an innovation by Shakespeare or Fletcher; as we have seen, as early as 1515 John Skelton was applying generic satirical insults to the cardinal which, as the century wore on, gradually came to typify public conceptions of Wolsey. By the end of Elizabeth's reign, the public had a firm grip on a characterization of Wolsey that was unkind, to say the least: reinforced by anti-Roman sentiment and the effects of texts like *Godly Queene Hester*, Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, and Skelton's satires of the 1520s, the dominant public image of Wolsey was of a grotesquely obese, greedy, pompous cardinal. It was in this environment that *Henry VIII* was composed. As is true with so many aspects of Shakespeare's works, it is difficult to state with any certainty exactly what either Shakespeare or Fletcher might have believed about Wolsey: the character can be played either as a pompous schemer repentant only once he has been caught, or as a hard-working and long-suffering agent of a capricious king. That this second interpretation—which would undercut the generally accepted and dominant sixteenth-century characterization of Wolsey—has heretofore largely been ignored both by literary critics and by directors and actors alike invites a more rigorous analysis of the cardinal's character in order to promote a more nuanced understanding of *Henry VIII*.

This chapter analyzes the depictions of Wolsey in *Henry VIII* to understand better how this particular text engages with the evolving nature of sixteenth-century portrayals of Wolsey. It first considers how Wolsey is constructed in the text itself, following the chronological sweep and cumulative effect of the text. Recurring images familiar from earlier texts are highlighted, along with features unique to this text. The central discussion focuses on not just Wolsey's character, but also on the impact of other characters on Wolsey. To highlight these interactions, this chapter has also been roughly structured by means of subcategories demonstrating the linear nature of Wolsey's characterization. The first section deals with Buckingham and how he impugns Wolsey (and, by implication, himself). The second considers the impact of the elaborate processions for which *Henry VIII* is famous. The third section reconsiders

Katherine's relationship with Wolsey, while the fourth is devoted to an analysis of Wolsey's self-representations at his fall. Finally, the fifth section analyzes the eulogies of Wolsey given by Katherine and Griffiths in Act 4.

Cardinal Wolsey in *Henry VIII* represents a dynamic confluence of early modern perspectives. With his flair for the dramatic he is a prime vehicle for pageantry and elaborate speeches, and is a seemingly paradoxical combination of a humanist *homo novus* and a lofty medieval prelate. His base birth and talent for politics are causes for wonder and ridicule for many of the noblemen in the text, but these are features which could endear Wolsey to a modern audience. Yet Wolsey is routinely portrayed as an obese blusterer, as in the Globe Theatre's 2010 production. In his otherwise critical review of that production for the *Telegraph*, Charles Spencer wrote that, "Best of all is Ian McNeice's grotesque Cardinal Wolsey, who hisses out his lines like a poisonous snake and slithers across the stage like a disgustingly plump slug. When he's on stage, this often inert play comes alive."[4] Negative portrayals of Wolsey are hardly a recent phenomenon: the 1628 revival was noteworthy for the then-current duke of Buckingham—the play's sponsor—walking out after his predecessor's beheading, indicating his belief that "his namesake in the play died as a result of being framed."[5] If Buckingham has been framed in the play, then Wolsey is necessarily the author of Buckingham's betrayal and therefore is the (or at least, a) villain of the play. The overwhelming trend of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was to place a sympathetic Katherine at the center of the play; as with Buckingham, if Katherine is to be the sympathetic focus of the text, then it is difficult to dismiss her anti-Wolsey position.[6] If Wolsey's character is not fleshed out to include the same sympathetic textual treatment, then the cardinal is again the villain of the play.

Historically, these two productions demonstrate the standard interpretations of this particular text. Productions both before and after the Interregnum tended to favor characterizations that linked Wolsey to rising anti-Catholic sentiments and to Archbishop William Laud (1573–1645): bluntly, these comparisons were not meant kindly to either man. Henry Harris's Wolsey in the Duke's Company's 1663 revival featured a "distinctly Anglican" costume, perhaps seeking to evoke Laud in the tensions of post-Restoration England.[7]

4 Spencer, "Henry VIII at Shakespeare's Globe, Review."

5 McMullan, 16.

6 McMullan, 28–32.

7 Fletcher, 179. The Duke's Company's patronage by the future James II came during a period of outward Anglican conformity, but James's subsequent Catholic conversion unsettles any definitive claims we might make about James's role in politicizing Wolsey's character in the play.

Henry VIII was also performed throughout the eighteenth century as a patriotic set-piece, notably in 1727 and in 1761 to celebrate the coronations of George II and George III.[8] The 1727 production was put on by Colley Cibber at Drury Lane, and given Cibber's association with the Cavendishes in 1688 (and thus his antipathy toward Catholicism, as William Cavendish was one of the disaffected noblemen who invited the future William III invade England) allows for a reasonable supposition that Wolsey was not presented in a positive light.[9]

Nineteenth-century productions saw an increased importance placed on the role of spectacle, including Covent Garden revivals in 1803, 1811, and 1822, followed by Charles Kean's 1855 production at the Princess's Theatre.[10] An American production in 1859 featured a female Wolsey—ostensibly to highlight the doomed relationship between Wolsey and Henry—and Samuel Phelps' Sadler's Wells performances in 1865 continued the trend of ever more spectacular productions.[11] Henry Irving's 1892 production featured a Wolsey who was "cultured and crafty," with "majesty in his lineaments," and notably not obese, as most interpretations have cast the cardinal.[12] This image of a lean cardinal would be reflected in Sir John Gielgud's adoption of the role in 1958.[13]

After the grandeur of the nineteenth-century revivals, many twentieth-century productions followed Terence Grey's 1931 minimalist production, which sought to highlight the cutthroat politics of the era by cutting away the pomp and grandeur that runs throughout the text. Greg Doran's landmark 1996 RSC production signaled the return of the elaborate processions which typified productions of this play throughout the nineteenth century, but Doran injected satirical elements to "reclaim the fullness of spectacle at the same time as demonstrating (and in order to demonstrate) its emptiness."[14] Doran's portrayal of the dichotomy of spectacle also compels the audience to view Wolsey as either fundamentally immoral or, more generously, as being seriously misguided. To further mark out Wolsey, Ian Hogg (as Wolsey) adopted a Suffolk accent, which contrasted with the more polished courtiers' accents

8 Fletcher, 181.

9 Fletcher, 181.

10 Fletcher, 181.

11 Fletcher, 182. The effect of a female Wolsey is worth briefly commenting on: a female Wolsey juxtaposed with an aggressively masculine Buckingham would draw out the tension between these two characters. This casting would also highlight the intimate partnership between Wolsey and Henry.

12 Fletcher, 185.

13 Fletcher, 190.

14 Doran in McMullan, 54.

and immediately indicated the cardinal was, at root level, an outsider at court.[15] In keeping with traditional productions, Hogg portrayed "Wolsey's worldliness and appetite for fleshly pleasures" and less emphasis was placed on Wolsey's emotional final scene with Cromwell.[16]

As we have seen, the general interpretation of *Henry VIII* has been to cast Wolsey as the manipulative, somewhat histrionic villain, pitting his bluster against the touchingly futile frustration of Katherine. However, this understanding relies heavily on a tacit acceptance of the anti-Wolsey prejudices that texts like *Speke, Parott* and the *Acts and Monuments* promoted. To adopt this view is to ignore the textual evidence which clearly indicates that Wolsey's character can (and perhaps ought to) be portrayed sympathetically. Furthermore, in portraying Wolsey in a positive light, many of the inconsistencies and difficulties presented by this text are resolved. Instead of the bland assembly of simplistic figures from a bygone age whom Charles Spencer derides in his review, we are given a *de casibus* tragedy, which—unusually—unsettles stock character images in order to produce more complex representations of these historical figures. This study will utilize Wolsey to indicate how—far from being "inert"—*Henry VIII, or, All Is True* showcases a rich and dynamic reworking of flat, stock historical figures. In this respect, this Wolsey character is an ideal candidate for this study precisely because he is not "inert" and is, in many ways, incomparable with any of the other Shakespearean cardinals. Though other cardinals certainly appear—notably Cardinal Beaufort in *1* and *2 Henry VI* and Cardinal Pandolf in *King John*—neither of them begin to approach the centrality to their respective plays that Wolsey achieves in four acts in *Henry VIII*. Cardinal Pandolf is a mere extension of the pope and the Roman Church and is far from a major character; outside the play, he was a foreign prelate (though often considered a "meddler" like Wolsey). Beaufort comes significantly closer to Wolsey: indeed, with descriptors like "the haughty Cardinal" (1.1.182) and "imperious churchman" (1.3.73), Beaufort may owe something to the sixteenth-century perceptions of Wolsey we have seen in previous chapters. Yet Beaufort is "more like a soldier than a man o' th' church" (1.1.183) and renowned for his blunt and coarse speech; he could not be more starkly juxtaposed with the haughty Wolsey. Furthermore, Beaufort is the second son of John of Gaunt, and the emphatically noble Plantagenet cardinal derived his power from his birth, in marked contrast to the humble birth of Wolsey. Thomas Cromwell is often compared with Wolsey, as both were of common birth and rose to

15 Russell Jackson, "Shakespeare at Stratford-upon-Avon, 1996–98; or the Search for a Policy," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 50, no. 2 (1999): 191.

16 Jackson, 192.

the highest circles in the Henrician government. Yet Cromwell appears too briefly in this text to enable a proper comparison, and certainly his Reformist beliefs and secular alignment would speak to a lack of similarity without more specific textual evidence. However, as we shall see, Cromwell is cast in a supportive and sympathetic role in 3.2; the doctrinal and personal differences between the two men are here far from apparent, and instead the authors emphasize the emotional bond between the cardinal and the secretary. Stephen Gardiner is perhaps the more obvious comparison—he is also a conservative churchman, and a bureaucrat trained by Wolsey—but while his stage presence outweighs Cromwell's, he is given too little stage-time to allow much development beyond acting as a foil to Cranmer and Cromwell. Wolsey is thus something of an anomaly in this play; he has no obvious parallels with other characters within the text, and, as we will see, is routinely misunderstood or misinterpreted by the other characters (and thus, often by the audience).

As mentioned previously, there are—generally speaking—two main interpretations of Wolsey, which can be classified as either sympathetic or unsympathetic. This distinction is particularly relevant for a stage production of this play: if the director portrays Wolsey as the industrious (if somewhat self-serving) victim of a fickle monarch, then his enemies necessarily have to be depicted as untrustworthy and ignoble. If Wolsey is rendered less sympathetically, then he appears as a manipulator whose deceptions eventually catch up with him. As with so many aspects of Shakespeare's works, this dichotomy makes his own opinions difficult to gauge, as well as increasing the difficulty of assigning passages to either Shakespeare or Fletcher. However, this ambiguity is itself revealing: while the overwhelming majority of Wolsey-related material in the sixteenth century painted a distinctly two-dimensional and negative picture of the cardinal, the Wolsey of *Henry VIII* can easily be interpreted sympathetically. The popular image of the bloated, cunning cardinal is undercut in this text by Wolsey's extended and emotional speeches, set both in dialogue and monologue.

Alongside the image of the obese, pompous Wolsey is that of the bureaucratic, work-driven Lord Chancellor; the negative impact of Wolsey's pompous displays of wealth are potentially complicated by the subtle and occasional references to his considerable work ethic. Paperwork is a recurring theme throughout the play and crucially it is only the commoners like Wolsey, Cromwell, and Gardiner who give any indication of the day-to-day workings of the state. By discussing Wolsey as he appears in the text itself—with an added emphasis on nonprejudicial interpretation—this study will demonstrate that Shakespeare and Fletcher provided for an altogether more nuanced

and sympathetic portrayal of the cardinal: a characterization which undercuts decades of negative imagery reinforced throughout the sixteenth century.

Mirrors of Courtesy: Buckingham, Norfolk, and Wolsey

Regardless of the interpretation that one director or actor might favor over another, the overwhelming majority of elements (both within this text and in a broader corpus) contributing to any characterization of Wolsey are negative and the contributions of most of the characters in *Henry VIII* reflect this. Indeed, the first we hear of Wolsey is from the most blatant and committed anti-Wolsey character in the play: Edward Stafford, third duke of Buckingham. As mentioned previously, Buckingham opens the play in discussion with Thomas Howard, second duke of Norfolk, about the recent meeting between Henry VIII and Francis I of France at the Field of Cloth-of-Gold.[17] As soon as Wolsey is mentioned, Buckingham clearly demonstrates himself to be a strong opponent of Wolsey:

> NORFOLK:
> All this was ordered by the good discretion
> Of the right reverend Cardinal of York.
> BUCKINGHAM:
> The devil speed him! No man's pie is freed
> From his ambitious finger. What had he
> To do in these fierce vanities? I wonder
> That such a keech can with his very bulk
> Take up the rays o' th' beneficial sun
> And keep it from the earth. (1.1.50–57)

The first impression the audience receives of Wolsey is hardly positive: he is ambitious, apparently greedy, bulky, and a "keech." The "keech" comment is a particularly apt insult from Buckingham's perspective: a keech is "a lump of congealed fat," a reference to Wolsey's father's alleged trade as a butcher as well as Wolsey's obesity.[18] That Wolsey is connected in this passage with food, congealed fat, obesity, and greed (in this case, attempting to enjoy exclusively the

17 The second duke of Norfolk died in 1524, and in the play is conflated with his son Thomas, who became the third duke on his father's death.

18 *OED*, "keech."

favors of the king, or "beneficial sun") is indicative of how Buckingham—and most of the nobility in the play—treat Wolsey throughout the play.

This depiction sets the tone for the dominant image of Wolsey, a figuring which Buckingham reinforces at every opportunity. Buckingham who initially presents both the main themes of Wolsey's characterization. As we have seen, he makes repeated references to Wolsey's base heritage, often related to the cardinal's father's trade as a butcher. Buckingham is also the first character to introduce the second theme: paperwork. The duke of Buckingham first draws the audience's awareness to Wolsey's proclivity for paperwork with a pun:

> Why the devil,
> Upon this French going-out, took he upon him,
> Without the privity o' th' King, t' appoint
> Who should attend on him? He makes up the file
> Of all the gentry, for the most part such
> To whom as great a charge, as little honour
> He meant to lay upon; and his own letter—
> The honourable board of Council out—
> Must fetch him in he papers. (1.1.72–80)

The pun here is on "file," meaning both a catalogue or list as well as a row or order of people.[19] The further paper-themed connections to "letter" and "papers" in lines 78 and 80 are less clear in a grammatical sense, but certainly reinforce the paperwork trope. Buckingham gives perhaps the most succinct connection of his feelings regarding Wolsey and paperwork when he sardonically laments that "A beggar's book / Outworths a noble's blood" (1.1.122–123). Buckingham's complaint is one of class resentment: his noble ancestry appears to matter little when set against Wolsey's bureaucratic administration.[20] His concerns are prescient, as his downfall is brought about not by any on-stage action but rather by evidence given in his trial. As Henry observes, it is the machinery of law which passes judgment on Buckingham, and even the king ostensibly cannot (or will not) attempt to force an outcome: "If he may / Find mercy in the law, 'tis his; if none, / Let him not seek't of us" (1.2.211–213).

Buckingham's "beggar's book" thus introduces the audience to the second main characterization of Wolsey. Though it is perhaps more subtle than the image of the grandiose, obese cardinal, paperwork is an essential component

19 *OED*, "file."

20 Lynne Magnusson, *Shakespeare and Social Dialogue: Dramatic Language and Elizabethan Letters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1999), 22.

of Wolsey's characterization in this play. Wolsey's first appearance in the play is marked by paperwork, as the Folio stage directions indicate that Wolsey should walk onstage surrounded by guards and secretaries, laden with papers:

> *Enter Cardinall Wolsey, the Purse borne before him, certaine of the Guard, and two Secretaries with Papers: The Cardinall in his passage, fixeth his eye on Buckham, and Buckingham on him, both full of disdaine.*[21]

In addition, Wolsey's first lines in the play are given to requesting papers from a secretary: "Where's his examination?" (1.1.116). The papers are significant, as they demonstrate visually and immediately the source of Wolsey's power. His penchant for organization and willingness to take on the mundane tasks of government were widely acknowledged, even by his enemies. After enumerating many instances of Wolsey's perceived meddling, John Foxe concluded that, "All thys, with much more, tooke he vpon hym, making the king beleue, that all should be to his honour."[22] Wolsey's ability to take on so much of the day-to-day, inglorious work of the Henrician government was happily exploited by Henry, but resented by Wolsey's rivals who felt that the cardinal had maneuvered himself into a position of power over the young monarch. The papers that constantly accompany Wolsey are not mere stage dressing, however. The "examination" Wolsey calls for in 1.1 is the testimony of Buckingham's surveyor, upon which the duke's trial is based and his execution justified. For Wolsey, paperwork is both the mechanism by which he exerts control over the Henrician court and the justification for his role within that court.

The audience is next exposed to one of the most frequent techniques used to characterize Wolsey in *Henry VIII.* The use of animal-based imagistic metaphors to attribute some stereotypical aspect of a particular animal to the cardinal was a common early modern trope and certainly not unique to Wolsey in itself. However, the frequency with which particular animals became connected with Wolsey throughout the sixteenth century specifically speaks to a codification of anti-Wolsey images, and the regular appearance of these images in *Henry VIII* reinforces this argument. One of the earliest of these images comes in the opening scene of the play, where the duke of Norfolk describes how Wolsey has thrust himself into power "spider-like / Out of his self-drawing web" (1.1.62–63). While Norfolk's spider image is provided in a somewhat complimentary context (he is proposing that there must be some positive qualities

21 William Shakespeare, *Mr. William Shakespeares comedies, histories, & tragedies* (London: I. Jaggard and E. Blount, 1623), 206.

22 Foxe, 1570 ed., 1160.

in Wolsey to have allowed him to rise so high in the king's estimation), it seems difficult to accept his words as being genuinely well-intentioned, with spiders then (as now) evoking images of darkness, craftiness, and poison. This impression becomes even more apparent as his character develops a distinct enmity toward the cardinal.

Both Buckingham and Norfolk quickly establish themselves as leading purveyors of these animal-image insults. Immediately before his comment about the "beggar's book," Buckingham laments that Wolsey has overshadowed him and that he, despite his noble lineage and wealth, is impotent against the cardinal: "This butcher's cur is venom-mouthed, and I / Have not the power to muzzle him: therefore best / Not wake him in his slumber" (1.1.120–122). Despite this admission, Buckingham is unable to restrain himself and immediately declares that he will decry Wolsey to the king himself:

> To th' King I'll say't, and make my vouch as strong
> As shore of rock. Attend. This holy fox,
> Or wolf, or both—for he is equal ravenous
> As he is subtle, and as prone to mischief
> As able to perform't—his mind and place
> Infecting one another—yea, reciprocally—
> Only to show his pomp as well in France
> As here at home, suggests the King our master
> To this last costly treaty, th'interview
> That swallowed so much treasure and like a glass
> Did break i' th' rinsing. (1.1.157–167)

The "fox" reference evokes Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Prince* (printed in 1532) and is in keeping with contemporary associations between foxes and negative character traits like cunning (as evidenced in Ben Jonson's 1606 *Volpone*, for example). Machiavelli's political philosophy encouraged rulers to adopt the cunning attributed to the fox and the strength of the lion. The fox is particularly important to emulate, as "a wise lord cannot, nor ought he to, keep faith when such observance may be turned against him, and when the reasons that caused him to pledge it exist no longer."[23] Buckingham further highlights Wolsey's perceived animal qualities by also calling him a "wolf," an allusion that evokes the rapaciousness of the clergy in Edmund Spenser's *The Shepheardes Calendar* (1579).[24] Spenser's wolves are—for Buckingham—synonymous with

23 Machiavelli, 92.

24 See pages 29–30 of this volume.

Wolsey. Wolsey has managed to disguise his true nature through "fraude and guile" in order to deceive the king and accrue previously unheard-of secular and ecclesiastic power in England. McMullan also points out the Biblical reference to Matthew 7:15, which characterizes false prophets as wolves in sheep's clothing.[25] Finally, onomatopoeic puns on "Wolsey" and "wolf" were not unknown, as we have seen previously.[26]

Refusing to be soothed by Norfolk, Buckingham accuses the "cunning Cardinal" (line 168) of undermining his own peace settlement with the French by attempting to manipulate Charles V to ascertain which ruler—Charles V or Francis I—would be better able to serve Wolsey's interests. Immediately before Buckingham's arrest, the duke puns on how he will depict Wolsey:

> NORFOLK:
> I am sorry
> To hear this of him, and could wish he were
> Something mistaken in 't.
> BUCKINGHAM:
> No, not a syllable.
> I do pronounce him in that very shape
> He shall appear in proof. (1.1.193–197)

Buckingham's plays on "syllable," "shape," and "proof" demonstrate his awareness of the powerful connection between Wolsey's textual characterizations, his metaphoric physical characteristics, and his reputation. Here we are given an opportunity to examine an ambiguity in Buckingham's character. From a character like Falstaff or Lear's Fool we would almost expect a knowing leer and a gesticulation implying Wolsey's reputedly large shape: physical humor being a staple of Shakespeare's and Fletcher's work. From this bluff, soldierly Buckingham the joke seems less for comic effect than for a satirical one, particularly when we remind ourselves of the Prologue's warning that an audience expecting ribald humor "will be deceived" (Prologue, l. 17). Buckingham refers to Wolsey as "the o'er-great Cardinal" (1.1.222) only a few lines later, to reinforce this insult. The routine insertion of these subtle (or not-so-subtle) puns by Buckingham provides a cumulatively powerful reinforcement to the popular image of the obese cardinal: in life, on stage, and in print.

Despite this early presentation of negative images, there are wholly positive characterizations of the cardinal early in the play as well. In 1.3, the Lord

25 McMullan, footnote to ll. 158–160, 225.

26 See chapter 1.

Chamberlain, Sir Thomas Lovell (c. 1449–1524), and Sir William Lord Sandys (c. 1470–1540) discuss with anticipation the entertainments planned by Wolsey that evening.[27] These three men—all noblemen—all praise Wolsey's generosity and hold the cardinal up as an example of liberality:

> CHAMBERLAIN:
> This night he makes a supper, and a great one,
> To many lords and ladies. There will be
> The beauty of this kingdom, I'll assure you.
> LOVELL:
> That churchman bears a bounteous mind indeed,
> A hand as fruitful as the land that feeds us:
> His dews fall everywhere.
> CHAMBERLAIN:
> No doubt he's noble—
> He had a black mouth that said other of him.
> SANDYS:
> He may, my lord; 'has wherewithal. In him
> Sparing would show a worse sin than ill doctrine.
> Men of his way should be most liberal:
> They are set here for examples.
> CHAMBERLAIN:
> True, they are so,
> But few now give so great ones. (1.3.52–63)

Lovell's metonym of Wolsey's hand is compared to England itself, using terms like "bounteous," "fruitful," and "dew," which evoke nature, sustenance, and wholesomeness. The Lord Chamberlain describes the cardinal as "noble," meaning that Wolsey possesses the qualities normally associated with the nobility, and furthermore that there are few men as generous as the cardinal. This comment highlights the tension in the play between the dual meanings of "nobility": as

27 The chronology of the play does not match the historical record, as is indicated by the difficulty in identifying who exactly the Lord Chamberlain is meant to be: Charles Somerset, first earl of Worcester (c. 1460–1526), was Lord Chamberlain until his death, and Lord Sandys took up the position after 1526. Yet both these men appear onstage together throughout the play, even well after the events of 1526 have passed. The playwrights telescoped the time between events for dramatic effect, resulting in occasional historical inaccuracies or moments of confusion. The same problem arises again with the inclusion of both the duke of Suffolk and a separate Brandon character later in the play.

a virtue, and as a descriptive term for the ancient titled families of England. Nobility is a dominant preoccupation of this play, as represented both by the substantial usage of noble and related terms as well as the dramatic impact of these usages. "Noble" occurs forty-one times in *Henry VIII* a figure surpassed only by *Coriolanus* (fifty-five) in Shakespeare's corpus.[28] "Nobleness"—an unusual Shakespearean usage, which only appears a total of fifteen times throughout the corpus—occurs once. "Nobility" appears three times in *Henry VIII* (out of a corpus-wide usage of thirty-six). This markedly high usage indicates a definite authorial focus on Wolsey as a recent manifestation of the tension between *hominis novi* and the ancient nobility. The fixation of the highest-ranking nobles like Buckingham, Norfolk, and Surrey on Wolsey's common birth stands in stark opposition to the Lord Chamberlain's opinion and further complicates the text's presentation of "nobility." Sir Robert Dallington wrote in his 1598 *View of Fraunce* (printed in 1604) that "Vertue . . . makes Nobilitie, for, there are noble Peasants, and peasantly Nobles."[29] The titled nobility—as represented by Buckingham, Norfolk, Surrey, and Suffolk—often fail to demonstrate the noble qualities that their birth nominally bestows. By contrast, Wolsey (a commoner) displays a sensitivity to status and hierarchy that often results in a far more noble appearance. The most pointed and summative comment of this concept in this excerpt is the Lord Sandys': that "Men of his way should be most liberal: / They are set here for examples" (1.3.60–61). That Wolsey is held up as one of the few positive "examples" of powerful men (at least, in terms of largesse) is telling. Men like Buckingham and Norfolk spend much of their time on stage speaking about nobility, but rarely is the audience given any evidence of their noble qualities in action. Wolsey is set in opposition to these men: he is of humble birth, but we are repeatedly given examples of his generosity, a trait normally associated with aristocrats.

Wolsey's masque is where we see the cardinal at his most benevolent and charismatic (and worldly). Upon his entrance, he welcomes his guests:

> You're welcome, my fair guests, That noble lady
> Or gentleman that is not freely merry
> Is not my friend. This, to confirm my welcome;
> And to you all, good health! (1.4.35–38)

28 Figures compiled using George Mason University's Open Source Shakespeare project, http://www.opensourceshakespeare.org/.

29 Sir Robert Dallington, *View of Fraunce* (London: Simon Stafford, 1604), f. 138. Accessed via Early English Books Online.

Wolsey's bluff, friendly, and eminently temporal attitude is appreciated by Lord Sandys, who repeats the Lord Chamberlain's compliment of Wolsey in 1.3.57, calling him "noble" (1.4.39). The cardinal's efforts at conviviality are repeated throughout the scene:

> My lord Sandys,
> I am beholding to you. Cheer your neighbours.
> Ladies, you are not merry. Gentlemen,
> Whose fault is this? (1.4.40–42)

The pageantry of the masque is orchestrated by Wolsey, who guides the revelry with benevolence and wit, recognizing the masked King Henry and wittily offering up his place as grandee of the evening:

> Pray, tell 'em thus much from me:
> There should be one amongst 'em, by his person,
> More worthy this place than myself; to whom,
> If I but knew him, with my love and duty
> I would surrender it. (1.4.770–774)

However, in the 1587 *Chronicles*, Fleming describes the same scene somewhat differently. Wolsey attempts to pick out Henry, but commits a gaffe:

> Then quoth the Cardinall to the lord chamberleine, I praie you (quoth he) that you would shew them, that me séemeth there should be a nobleman amongst them, who is more meet to occupie this seat and place than I am, to whome I would most gladlie surrender the same according to my dutie, if I knew him.
>
> Then spake the lord chamberleine to them in French, and they rounding him in the eare, the lord chamberlein said to my lord cardinall: Sir (quoth he) they confesse, that among them there is such a noble personage, whome, if your grace can appoint him out from the rest, he is content to disclose himselfe, and to accept your place. With that the Cardinall taking good aduisement among them, at the last (quoth he) me séemeth the gentleman with the blacke beard, should be euen be: and with that he arose out of his chaire, and offered the same to the gentleman in the blacke beard with his cap in his hand. The person to whom he offered the chaire was sir Edward Neuill, a comelie knight, that much more resembled the kings person in that maske than anie other.

> The king could not forbeare laughing, but pulled downe his visar and master Neuels also, and dashed out such a pleasant countenance and théere, that all the noble estates there assembles, perceiuing the king to be there among them, reioised verie much.[30]

In this anecdote, Wolsey misidentifies Sir Edward Nevill as the king: a mistake about which Henry VIII cannot resist teasing the cardinal. This event apparently did take place as Holinshed recounts it, as George Cavendish mentions it in his *Life*. The effect that this mistake had on the real Wolsey/Henry relationship was apparently negligible, whereas the textual impact of the revised event—in which Wolsey successfully recognizes the king—in *Henry VIII* is much more significant. McMullan speculates that the reason for this revision is to "demonstrate the (doomed) intimacy of King and Cardinal."[31] It certainly transforms a slightly embarrassing mistake into a demonstration of obvious closeness between the monarch and the cardinal. The introduction of Henry to Anne Boleyn later in this scene foreshadows the rift that opens between Henry and Wolsey. Anne's power over Henry is a source of surprise and dismay for the cardinal, not least of all because he is universally suspected of orchestrating Katherine's fall and replacement despite having no awareness of Henry's relationship with Anne.

The merrymaking of 1.4 transitions is juxtaposed with the execution of Buckingham in 2.1. The two Gentlemen, to inform the audience of off-stage events, discuss Wolsey's Machiavellian culpability in Buckingham's arraignment: "Certainly the Cardinal is the end of this" (2.1.39). They accuse Wolsey of sending off any potential rivals for the king's favor, and in part due to this, the common people (and in particular, the House of Commons, as Wolsey observes in 1.2) hate the cardinal:

> All the commons
> Hate him perniciously and o' my conscience,
> Wish him ten fathom deep. This Duke as much
> They love and dote on, call him "bounteous Buckingham,
> The mirror of all courtesy"—(2.1.49–53)

Despite the Second Gentleman's statement, the audience is given no first- or second-hand evidence of Buckingham's bounty. There is a similar paucity of

30 Fleming, 1587 ed., 922.

31 Gordon McMullan, note to l. 86, 264.

evidence given for Wolsey's unpopularity: the only reason we are given for the Commons' dislike of Wolsey is the cardinal's alleged role in organizing the heavy tax imposed in Act 1 as well as a more general dislike of a fellow commoner supplanting roles traditionally given to members of the nobility.

The Second Gentleman also cries up Buckingham as the "mirror of all courtesy," but Buckingham is uniformly unable to maintain a courteous demeanor. Just prior to the excerpt above, the two Gentlemen narrate Buckingham's arraignment:

> 2 GENTLEMAN:
> After all this, how did he bear himself?
> 1 GENTLEMEN:
> When he was brought out again to th' bar to hear
> His knell rung out, his judgement, he was stirred
> With such an agony he sweat extremely
> And something spoke in choler, ill and hasty;
> But he fell to himself again, and sweetly
> In all the rest showed a most noble patience. (2.1.30–36)

As in 1.1 when Buckingham's anger overwhelms Norfolk's attempts to soothe him, so too can we see Buckingham's inability to submit "sweetly." We find the same characteristic in Buckingham's execution speech later in 2.1; though the speech is couched in terms of humility and forbearance—and is genuinely moving in places—the Duke is not always able to control his anger against his detractors:

> The law I bear no malice for my death—
> 'T has done upon the premises but justice—
> But those that sought it I could wish more Christians.
> Be what they will, I heartily forgive 'em.
> Yet let 'em look they glory not in mischief
> Nor build their evils on the graves of great men,
> For then my guiltless blood must cry against 'em. (2.1.62–68)

The remark about "Christians" and "those that sought it" is clearly directed at the cardinal. Admittedly, Buckingham here is making a pointed reference not just to Wolsey but also to Nicholas Hopkins, "that devil monk" (2.1.21) whose accusations against Buckingham formed the basis of his conviction for treason. Buckingham implies that two churchmen—a cardinal and a Chartreux

friar—conspired between them to undo him in a manner not in keeping with their professed religious code. Although Buckingham's accusations might well be true, it is difficult to find the duke entirely trustworthy since, as we have seen, his choleric disposition so often undermines his professed (and sometimes believed) civility. Though he might indeed be "richer than [his] base accusers" (2.1.104), comments of that sort unsettle the audience's understanding of which characters ought to be supported.

Despite the inconsistency found in Buckingham's speeches, he is a charismatic character and his obvious passion is not at all easy to dismiss. Previous scenes have largely undercut negative characterizations by allowing a character to make a derogatory accusation against Wolsey, which is followed by a much more substantial positive reply either by other characters or by the circumstances of the play. However, in 2.1 this pattern is somewhat altered: after Buckingham's execution, we are again returned to the conversation between the two Gentlemen. Passing over the duke's execution, they discuss the recent gossip that Henry is planning to separate from Katherine and accuse Wolsey of planting the seeds of this divorce in the king's mind:

> 2 GENTLEMAN
> But that slander, sir,
> Is found a truth now, for it grows again
> Fresher than e'er it was, and held for certain
> The King will venture at it. Either the Cardinal
> Or some about him near have, out of malice
> To the good Queen, possessed him with a scruple
> That will undo her. To confirm this, too,
> Cardinal Campeggio is arrived, and lately,
> As all think, for this business.
> 1 GENTLEMAN
> 'Tis the Cardinal;
> And merely to revenge him on the Emperor
> For not bestowing on him at his asking
> The archbishopric of Toledo this is purposed. (2.1.153–163)

The presence of Campeggio in England adds substance to what might otherwise have been a passing speculation. That we are given no evidence of Wolsey's having been involved is largely irrelevant; the Gentlemen provide their own reasons for Wolsey's machinations (the loss of the archbishopric of Toledo being foremost). If this dialogue had been preceded by a rebuttal

of Buckingham's accusations against Wolsey, a more positive and consistent overall image of the cardinal would have emerged. Instead, the setting-up of Wolsey against Katherine—a clearly sympathetic character—creates a frisson of uncertainty about the cardinal:

> 2 GENTLEMAN
> I think you have hit the mark. But is't not cruel
> That she should feel the smart of this? The Cardinal
> Will have his will and she must fall. (2.1.164–166)

While heretofore it has been relatively straightforward to categorize Wolsey as the maligned victim of the haughty nobility, the end of 2.1 creates an ambiguity about the cardinal's character that permits a director or actor (or audience) retroactively and proactively to recolor Wolsey as a villain. The Second Gentleman's assertion that "The Cardinal / Will have his will and she must fall" highlights how, within the play text, assumptions about Wolsey's involvement in the divorce lead to the cardinal's vilification as the author of both Katherine's and Buckingham's respective downfalls. However, we are given no evidence whatsoever that Wolsey did anything to encourage the divorce; indeed, Wolsey loses Henry's favor specifically because he is demonstrably against the divorce.

This excerpt succinctly demonstrates the recurring presence of accusations made against Wolsey for which the audience either is given no evidence or which are directly contradicted. These two anonymous gentlemen appear on-stage to provide Wolsey's contemporary public image, which does not agree entirely with what we see on-stage. It is worth recalling that while this play bears the alternate title "All Is True," we are not told who on stage (if anyone) is the provider of these truths. Certainly the Second Gentleman's assertions about Wolsey's role in the divorce are manifestly untrue, which ought to prompt the audience to examine the other claims made in the play. This undermining emphasizes the need for the director and actors to approach the text without importing prior conceptions of the main characters: a process that enriches the characters on stage and casts doubts on Wolsey's role as villain.

After 2.1, we are exposed to increasingly hyperbolic rhetoric from Wolsey's enemies and in particular from the duke of Norfolk, who was comparatively conciliatory in 1.1. After the death of Buckingham, Norfolk maintains a clearly anti-Wolsey stance from as early in the play as 2.2, immediately following Buckingham's execution. Though he does not mention it, it is plausible—even probable—that Norfolk's change of heart resulted from Buckingham's overthrow. Certainly it seems reasonable to assume that with Buckingham dead, Norfolk might well find himself in direct conflict with the cardinal. He therefore

hardens his stance against Wolsey and resolves to undermine Henry's faith in his Lord Chancellor:

> CHAMBERLAIN:
> It seems the marriage with his brother's wife
> Has crept too near his conscience.
> SUFFOLK:
> No, his conscience
> Has crept too near another lady.
> NORFOLK
> This is the Cardinal's doing. The King-Cardinal,
> That blind priest, like the eldest son of Fortune,
> Turns what he list. The King will know him one day. (2.2.18–20)

To explain his determination to effect a split between Henry and Wolsey, Norfolk repeats the Gentlemen's rumor that it was Wolsey who first caused the king's unease on the issue of the consanguinity between Katherine and Henry by virtue of her first marriage to Arthur, Henry's older brother. In 2.2, the audience is made aware for the first time that the pending divorce proceedings are a source of moral outrage for Norfolk:

> [Wolsey] dives into the King's soul and there scatters
> Dangers, doubts, wringing of the conscience,
> Fears and despairs—and all these for his marriage.
> And out of all these, to restore the King,
> He counsels a divorce, a loss of her
> That like a jewel has hung twenty years
> About his neck yet never lost her lustre (2.2.25–31)

However, it is not entirely clear why Norfolk here opposes the divorce, since he is Anne Boleyn's kinsman.[32] Norfolk's words may well be genuine, but it seems more feasible that Norfolk has realized the danger posed to him by Wolsey: after all, he is only moved to such language after perhaps his only true peer in the kingdom is removed (Buckingham and Norfolk being two of the wealthiest and most powerful men in the realm, next to Wolsey). In this light, it is perhaps significant that Buckingham's execution is an act which Norfolk does not mention (though certainly other characters in the play recite gossip

32 As previously noted, Norfolk is a conflation of the second and third dukes: it is not clear if this character is meant to be Anne's grandfather or uncle.

that it was Wolsey who was responsible for engineering Buckingham's downfall). Norfolk warns Charles Brandon, the newly minted duke of Suffolk, that they must act before Wolsey causes them to be undone as well:

> We had need pray,
> And heartily, for our deliverance,
> Or this imperious man will work us all
> From princes into pages. All men's honors
> Lie like one lump before him, to be fashioned
> Into what pitch he pleases. (2.2.43–48)

This prophetic statement comes by means of a series of metaphors and similes. Norfolk casts Wolsey as a laborer who, despite his low birth, is able to manipulate the standing of the highest-ranking noblemen in the kingdom as a potter might manipulate clay. Norfolk does so by means of phrases like "will work" and "to be fashioned"—which evoke craftsmanship and manual labor—combined with the "lump" simile, which likens the nobility and their honors to malleable clay. The "princes into pages" metaphor is a particularly apt one, as it evokes the "paperwork" theme discussed above. Norfolk is punning on "page" as meaning both a servant to a nobleman as well as a page in a book or ledger: the metaphor is constructed to state that through Wolsey's (ab)use of bureaucracy, even the greatest noblemen in the realm could be reduced (or even killed).

Ostensibly one of the most trustworthy sources about Wolsey would be Henry: not only is he the titular character, but he is also presented throughout as a stern, chivalrous, and fair-minded monarch (at least, this is the ostensible manner in which we are meant to see Henry; the subtext is more complex). It is comparatively rare in the play text that we actually hear much from Henry about Wolsey (for example, we hear much more about Wolsey from Katherine), but we are given a brief opportunity in 2.2. Henry, anxiously waiting for Wolsey and Campeggio to pass judgment on the validity of his marriage to Katherine, acts in juxtaposition to Wolsey's detractors who previously linked Wolsey with unhealthiness (including Buckingham's reference to Wolsey as "venom-mouth'd"):

> Who's there? My good lord Cardinal? O my Wolsey,
> The quiet of my wounded conscience,
> Thou art a cure fit for a king. [To Campeggio] You're welcome,
> Most learned reverend sir, into our kingdom;

Use us and it. [to Wolsey] My good lord, have great care
I be not found a talker. (2.2.72–77)

As one of the most clearly charismatic characters in the play, it is difficult to dismiss Henry's characterization of Wolsey as a "cure fit for a king." Whereas this snapshot of Wolsey and his master is clearly positive, the audience has been shown only a concerted undercutting of the generally positive set of characterizations of the cardinal. It is not clear if the audience is expected to believe Henry, or instead understand that Wolsey has manipulated the trusting king. This uncomfortable tension is reinforced by Wolsey's response to Campeggio's inquiry about Richard Pace (an ambassador reputed to have gone mad when Wolsey repeatedly blocked favors from the king):[33]

CAMPEGGIO:
Believe me, there's an ill opinion spread, then,
Even of yourself, lord Cardinal.
WOLSEY:
How? Of me?
CAMPEGGIO:
They will not stick to say you envied [Pace],
And fearing he would rise—he was so virtuous—
Kept him a foreign man still, which so grieved him
That he ran mad and died.
WOLSEY:
Heaven's peace be with him:
That's Christian care enough. For living murmurers
There's places of rebuke. He was a fool, for he would needs be virtuous.
[Gestures toward Gardiner] That good fellow,
If I command him, follows my appointment.
I will have none so near else. Learn this, brother:
We live not to be griped by meaner persons. (2.2.123–134)

McMullan describes this passage as indicative of Wolsey's "Machiavellianism," and it is difficult to find a more positive moral interpretation of Wolsey's

33 For more information on Pace's illness and Wolsey's alleged role in exacerbating it, see Fletcher, 119.

callous response to Campeggio's question.[34] The only possible explanation is that Wolsey never learned a lesson valuable to all politicians: a civil servant might not value public opinion as much as talent, but an angry public can certainly scupper a talented career in a moment's notice.

Making Greatness Familiar: Ceremony and Processions in *Henry VIII*

As mentioned previously, one of the features that is generally remembered about *Henry VIII* is its use of grand processions, and Wolsey in particular is one of the primary providers of these spectacles. That this feature made a strong impact even when first performed is made clear in a letter from Sir Henry Wotton to Sir Edmund Bacon, dated June 29, 1613:

> The King's players had a new play, called *All is True*, representing some principal pieces of the reign of Henry VIII, which was set forth with many extraordinary circumstances of pomp and majesty, even to the matting of the stage: the Knights of the Order with their Georges and garters, the guards with their embroidered coats and the like—sufficient in truth within a while to make greatness very familiar, if not ridiculous.[35]

This quotation demonstrates two things: first, that this play has consistently been performed in a grand style as early as 1613 (and the First Folio stage directions provide a level of detail which is much greater than in other plays, which confirms that early productions were likely to be consistent in this respect). Second, it shows that the effect of this elaborate staging was to make "greatness very familiar, if not ridiculous." To an extent, this interpretation aptly demonstrates the tendency to stage this play as a spectacular *de casibus* tragedy. The staging provides continual and increasingly elaborate reminders of just how wealthy and powerful these figures were. While there certainly are comedic opportunities in the text, it is telling that Wotton (a committed evangelical) found elements of the play "ridiculous," rather than sympathetic: it is not a stretch to imagine that a heavy-handed portrayal of a villainous Wolsey getting his just deserts might have seemed satisfyingly comic to Wotton.

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34 McMullan, note to ll. 128–134, 288.

35 Quoted in Janette Dillon, *The Cambridge Introduction to Early English Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 207.

Certainly the opportunity for such a portrayal is present in the text: as we have seen in the masque in 1.4, one of the key ways in which both the historical Wolsey and this particular fictional Wolsey attempted to manipulate public opinion is through the use of grand—often ostentatious—events, designed to reflect the power and wealth of the cardinal. In a similar fashion, the procession in 2.4 has often been pointed out as a visual testament to Wolsey's pomp and overweening pride.[36] McMullan rightly points out that the detailed stage directions are clearly taken from Holinshed's description of Wolsey's entering Westminster Hall (stage directions in italics and Holinshed quotation following, with elements to compare in bold):

> *Trumpets, sennet and cornetts. Enter two Vergers with short silver wands; next them two* Scribes *in the habit of doctors; after them, the Archbishop of Canterbury alone; after him, the* Bishops of LINCOLN, *Ely, Rochester and St Asaph; next them, with some small distance, follows a Gentleman, bearing* the purse with the great seal and a cardinal's hat; *then two Priests*, bearing each a silver cross; *then a* Gentleman Usher, bare-headed, *accompanied by a Sergeant-at-arms*, bearing a silver mace; *then two Gentlemen*, bearing two great silver pillars; *after them, side by side, the two Cardinals; two* Noblemen with the sword and mace. (2.4)
>
> Now of his order in going to Westminster hall dailie in the tearme. First yer he came out of his priuie chamber, he heard seruice in his closet, and there said his seruice with his chapleine; then going againe to his priuie chamber, he would demand if his seruants were in a readinesse, and furnished his chamber of presence, and waiting chamber. Being thereof then aduertised, he came out of his priuie chamber about eight of the clocke. . . .
>
> *Before him was borne first the broad seale of England*, and *his cardinals hat*, by a lord, or some gentleman of worship, right solemnlie: and as soone as he was once entered into his chamber of presence, *his two great crosses* were there attending to be borne before him: *then cried the gentlemen vshers, going before him bare headed*, and said: On before my lords and maisters, on before, make waie for my lords grace. Thus went he downe through the hall with a *sergeant of armes before him, bearing a great mace of siluer*, and *two gentlemen carieng two great pillers of siluer*. And when he came at the hall doore, there was his mule, being trapped all in crimsin veluet, with a saddle of the same stuffe, and gilt stirrups. Then was there attending vpon him when he was mounted, *his two crosse-bearers: and his*

36 See McMullan's note to ll. 6–9.

> *piller-bearers* in like case vpon great horsses, trapped all in fine scarlet. Then marched he forward with a traine of noble men and gentlemen, hauing his footmen foure in number about him, *bearing ech of them a gilt piller in their hands*.[37]

McMullan argues that the procession is meant to reflect Wolsey's pride and cites Foakes as stating that "Wolsey's substitution of a pair of silver pillars for the usual cardinal's mace was already seen at the time as a particularly arrogant gesture."[38] Of course, there is an element of Foakes' point that is undeniable: Wolsey was a keen cultivator of a grand public image, on the occasion of the divorce hearing and in daily business. A favorable interpretation would be that Wolsey's image reflects the power of both the Church and his king; an unfavorable critic might (and perhaps justly) have pointed out that Wolsey's demonstrations of wealth and status were a result of his pride. Despite this, the stage directions do not indicate a level of spectacle above what might be expected. In fact, the procession is far from overly grandiose, considering that the two cardinals—direct representatives of the pope—are taking disputations from the king of England and his queen on the validity of their marriage: an event that surely warranted a substantial display of wealth and power by the participants, given the keen awareness of the performative value of such events by the participants. As the Holinshed account above demonstrates (as well as the corresponding anecdote in Cavendish's *Life*), Wolsey's crosses, pillars, and mace were standard, daily fixtures on all his official business; while Wolsey was a proud man, it was not completely unreasonable for him to use these symbols. Furthermore, Foakes's interpretation of Wolsey's manipulation of regalia is inaccurate: the archiepiscopal crosses were taken to represent Wolsey's archbishopric of York, the pillars his legatine status, and the mace his position as Lord Chancellor.[39] Wolsey's red *galero* is also carried to indicate Wolsey's cardinalate. Though some cardinals may have used crosses instead of pillars, it is feasible that Wolsey felt it necessary to distinguish between the

37 Fleming, 1587 ed., 921.

38 McMullan, note to 2.4, 299.

39 For more information on legatine regalia, see *Caeremoniale Episcoporum* (1984), especially sections pertaining to archiepiscopal crosses (62, 79). Wolsey's choice of processionary pillars and crosses may not be proscribed specifically by contemporary sources, but there appears to have been no contemporary consensus (or attempt at consensus) to limit his choice of regalia. The use of these crosses appears to go back to the tenth *Ordo Romanus* in the eleventh century.

marks of rank due to his (domestic) archbishopric, cardinalate, status as legate *a latere*, and his office as Lord Chancellor.

The inclusion of these ecclesiastic and heraldic objects does not necessarily denote personal pride; throughout the text of *Henry VIII*, Wolsey is highly sensitive to forms of address, symbols of office, and proper procedures. As we will see, his qualms about Henry's marriage to Anne Boleyn primarily rest on her inadequate pedigree and lack of political advantage: only after he mutters about her birth does he complain about her allegedly Reformist tendencies. For Wolsey, personal insults are vexing, but it is the insults due to his office (and by extension, the king or Church) that he finds unbearable, as we see when he is ordered to surrender the Great Seal. However, it is not only his own dignity to which he is sensitive: he repeatedly criticizes the noblemen in the play for acting in an ignoble manner, and he chides Katherine several times for her "unqueenly" conduct. In light of these characteristic elements, it seems clear that it is not necessarily personal pride exclusively which motivates Wolsey to conduct elaborate processions and to dismiss the nobility, but rather a keen sensitivity to office and estate.

As we have seen, Holinshed's *Chronicles* and Cavendish both make clear that Wolsey's procession in the legatine court was a part of his everyday routine and did not necessarily reveal an attempt to demonstrate personal glory, particularly in this instance. This reading is reinforced by the elaborate processions found later in *Henry VIII*, of which there are many, including twelve separate grand entrances in addition to descriptions of great events.[40] As an example, one of the most spectacular entrances in the play comes with Anne Boleyn's wedding in 4.1. There are twenty-two lines of stage directions detailing the pageantry of the new queen's wedding procession. In these instructions, most notable is the level of detail given in regards to the symbols of office:

> *A lively flourish of trumpets.*
> *Then, two Judges.*
> *Lord Chancellor, with purse and mace before him.*
> *Choristers singing. Music.*
> *Mayor of London, bearing the mace. Then* GARTER, *in his coat of arms, and on his head he wears a gilt copper crown.*
> *Marquess Dorset, bearing a sceptre of gold, on his head a demi-coronal of gold. With him the* Earl of SURREY, *bearing the rod of silver with the dove, crowned with an earl's coronet. Collars of esses.*

40 Michael Woodcock, "'Their eyes more attentive to the show'": Spectacle, Tragedy and the Structure of *All Is True* (*Henry VIII*)," *Shakespeare* 7, no. 1 (2011): 1–15.

> Duke of SUFFOLK, *in his robe of estate, his coronet on his head, bearing a long white wand, as High Steward. With him, the* Duke of NORFOLK,[41] *with the rod of marshalship, a coronet on his head. Collars of esses.*
> *A canopy, borne by four of the Cinque Ports; under it, the Queen* [Anne] *in her robe, in her hair, richly adorned with pearl; crowned. On each side her, the* Bishops of *London and* Winchester.
> *The old Duchess of Norfolk, in a coronal of gold wrought with flowers, bearing the Queen's train.*
> *Certain Ladies or Countesses, with plain circlets of gold without flowers.*
> *Exeunt, first passing over the stage in order and state,*
> *And then a great flourish of trumpets.* (4.1.36.2–23)

It is indicative of the persistent nature of Wolsey's negative public image that McMullan provides thorough commentary on this excerpt but cites Foukes's argument that the same detail when applied to Wolsey argues for a pompous characterization. McMullan correctly identifies Holinshed as the source for this excerpt, but ignores the implications of the detail of the event: if grand processions are negative, then so too must be Anne Boleyn's wedding. Yet this surely is not the case; in the play text the audience is given a respectful and admiring commentary throughout the procession, and the occasional contention and controversy which dogged Anne throughout the Tudor dynasty is not explicitly mentioned. That Anne should be treated with care is no surprise, since she was the recently deceased Elizabeth I's mother. Indeed, Elizabeth's baptism presents the audience with the final ceremonial procession (found in 5.3, wherein we are shown scenes of wealth and power similar to the two earlier procession), which cements the purpose of these elaborate displays. They are not intended to reflect Wolsey's greed, but instead designed as theatrical spectacle. If there is any message about individual characters to be drawn from these scenes, it is one which underlines the power and wealth of England and its monarchs. Wolsey's power derives from Henry's beneficence; furthermore, Henry's power is reflected in the presence of two papal legates sitting in judgment on his divorce. These factors, combined with the positive figuring of the later two processions indicate that calling Wolsey's procession an example of the cardinal's sinful pride exclusively is not necessarily correct.

41 With Anne's wedding taking place years after the death of the second duke, and with the presence of the "old duchess of Norfolk," the duke of Norfolk now appears to be the third duke.

Katherine and Wolsey: Representations in Conflict

Katherine is in many ways one of the most memorable characters in the play and, generally has been portrayed as the heroine of the play. However, Katherine's interactions with Wolsey—from the play text perspective—are more complex than a simple heroine-villain relationship. Instead, Katherine's characterizations of Wolsey are based on a fundamental misapprehension of the cardinal: in the play we are given no evidence that Wolsey actually is the beset queen's enemy, but as she perceives him to be, she characterizes him as such. Her first appearance in *Henry VIII* sets the tone for her treatment of the cardinal throughout the play. Katherine begins the scene by making Henry VIII aware of an exorbitant new tax that has been levied in his name. She accuses Wolsey of bearing responsibility for a tax requiring a sixth of the value of all private property in England, shaping her accusation into a religious and physiological report:

> You [Wolsey] know no more than others, but you frame
> Things that are known alike, which are not wholesome
> To those which would not know them and yet must
> Perforce be their acquaintance. These exactions
> Whereof my sovereign would have note, they are
> Most pestilent to th' hearing, and to bear 'em
> The back is sacrifice to th' load. They say
> They are devised by you, or else you suffer
> Too hard an exclamation. (1.2.42–52)

By infusing her speech with health-related terms like "not wholesome" and "most pestilent," Katherine sets up Wolsey as a contagion, of which this tax is a symptom. She then compounds the image by expounding on the impact of this tax, and the moral and political implications thereof:

> The subjects' grief
> Comes through commissions which compels from each
> The sixth part of his substance, to be levied
> Without delay; and the pretence for this
> Is named your wars in France. This makes bold mouths:
> Tongues spit their duties out, and cold hearts freeze
> Allegiance in them. Their curses now
> Live where their prayers did, and it's come to pass

This tractable obedience is a slave
To each incensed will. I would your highness
Would give it quick consideration, for
There is no primer baseness. (1.2.56–67)

Katherine follows on from her initial characterization of Wolsey as a disease by describing the results of this tax. She maintains pressure on Wolsey by enumerating the treasonous symptoms caused by Wolsey and associating those symptoms with a particular body part, to underline the symptom/disease metaphor.

It is in defense against Katherine's accusations that we are given Wolsey's first self-characterizations and images in the play. Wolsey declares his innocence, and attempts to undermine Katherine's anonymous "tongues" to lament the way the public misconceive him:

If I am
Traduced by ignorant tongues, which neither know
My faculties nor person yet will be
The chronicles of my doing, let me say
'Tis but the fate of place and the rough brake
That virtue must go through. (1.2.71–75)

Wolsey's first attempts at self-characterization in this play demonstrate a metatextual, prophetic awareness of his fate. Shakespeare and Fletcher provide a momentary blurring of the fourth wall in which Wolsey foretells his fall within the play as well as the manner of the posthumous characterizations of the historical Wolsey promoted in the Elizabethan chronicles by authors like Foxe and Holinshed. This concern has analogues in several of Shakespeare's plays. In *Antony and Cleopatra*, for example, Cleopatra has a similar awareness of her own future representations:

Nay, 'tis most certain, Iras: saucy lictors
Will catch at us, like strumpets; and scald rhymers
Ballad us out o' tune: the quick comedians
Extemporally will stage us, and present
Our Alexandrian revels; Antony
Shall be brought drunken forth, and I shall see
Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness
I' the posture of a whore. (5.2.210–217)

Cleopatra's prediction raises a concern about representations of historical characters that, in many ways, lies at the center of *Henry VIII* and ties it to many of the other history plays. Wolsey's prophetic moment, like Cleopatra's, functions on an understanding that public figures are rarely given a chance to manage their own public images. More important, posthumous reputations of the great men and women of history are adapted, unsettled, and disseminated by any number of characterizations, and that even the meanest "squeaking boy" can portray Egypt's most famous queen. In a similar way, so too can the butcher's boy from Ipswich rise to unprecedented heights in the Henrician court, but he too is doomed to infamy: or worse, lampooning, as in Foxe's anecdote of the garbage-filled saddlebags, or in Ian McNeice's portrayal of Wolsey as a "plump slug."

While Cleopatra's suicide is the only way she can control the end of her story, Wolsey adopts a more defiant tone, proclaiming that unknown future slanders are the "rough brake / That virtue must go through" (1.2.74). He responds to Katherine's accusations by carefully casting her sources as unreliable, and that he—and by extension, Henry—should not succumb to rumor or false interpretation:

> We must not stint
> Our necessary actions in the fear
> To cope malicious censurers, which ever,
> As ravenous fishes, do a vessel follow
> That is new-trimmed, but benefit no further
> Than vainly longing. What we oft do best,
> By sick interpreters, or weak ones, is
> Not ours or not allowed; what worst, as oft,
> Hitting a grosser quality, is cried up
> For our best act. If we shall stand still
> In fear our motion will be mocked or carped at,
> We should take root here where we sit,
> Or sit state-statues only. (1.2.76–88)

In anonymizing and dismissing his detractors as "sick interpreters," Wolsey reveals a fundamental misunderstanding of court politics. He ignores the "rough brake" and focuses only on the king, a mistake that leaves him utterly reliant on the king's benevolence. Though the defensive quality to this excerpt is obvious and the appropriateness of this particular political philosophy might be debatable, Wolsey's penchant for dramatic speech-making is clear.

In lines 71–75 Wolsey uses the first-person singular pronouns to highlight his humility and sense of personal insult, but when he moves on to describe what the government ought to do, he uses the first-person plural we and our to deflect personal accountability and to engender a sense of inclusion and representation. Wolsey also appropriates Katherine's public illness trope by dismissing the ill-informed criticism of "sick" or "weak" commentators. Henry VIII brushes aside Wolsey's speech, however, and demands the tax be rescinded. Wolsey then instructs his secretary to indicate that the revoking of the tax was the cardinal's doing:

> WOLSEY: [*apart to his Secretary*] A word with you. (1.2.102)
> Let there be letters writ to every shire
> Of the King's grace and pardon. The grieved commons
> Hardly conceive of me: let it be noised
> That through our intercession this revokement
> And pardon comes. I shall anon advise you
> Further in the proceeding. (1.2.102–108)

This is a moment which reveals Wolsey's keen awareness of his own unpopularity and the importance of shaping a political image. It is not a flattering moment, to be certain, and tinges Wolsey's previous plea of innocence with an unsettling streak of dishonesty. It contributes to the sense of Wolsey's Machiavellianism which, as we have seen, is a point that is raised repeatedly by Wolsey's enemies in *Henry VIII*.

Wolsey's pride is a continual theme running throughout the sixteenth century and thus through this play, with one of the most dramatic examples coming in 2.4. Katherine, having been summoned to present her case for the legality of her marriage with Henry, accuses Wolsey of seeking her downfall and, in doing so, highlights his lack of humility and maliciousness:

> WOLSEY:
> Be patient yet.
> KATHERINE:
> I will, when you are humble—nay, before,
> Or God will punish me. I do believe,
> Induced by potent circumstances, that
> You are mine enemy, and make my challenge
> You shall not be my judge. For it is you
> Have blown this coal betwixt my lord and me,

> Which God's dew quench. Therefore, I say again,
> I utterly abhor, yea, from my soul
> Refuse you for my judge, whom yet once more
> I hold my malicious foe and think not
> At all a friend to truth. (2.4.71–82)

Katherine is one of the few historical figures from this period for whom modern scholars can readily claim general popularity throughout her lifetime and well beyond. Characterizations of Katherine are almost exclusively positive, and the self-affirmative nature of these characterizations have sustained this trend throughout the early modern period, complicating separation of the historical and fictional Katherines well into the modern day. As an example, Charles Jarvis Hill and William Allan Neilson claim that Katherine alone in the play "shows any great creative imagination. Though all her acts and much of her language are taken from [Holinshed's] Chronicles, the dramatist has bestowed on her a pathetic dignity which elevates her to such a pitch that in spite of her passive role she stands out as the real heroine of the play."[42] Hill and Neilson do not discuss how the dramatist(s) has adapted Holinshed's Katherine to create this sense of "pathetic dignity," but rather rely on a received characterization of Katherine built over the last five centuries. Despite this, Hill and Neilson are not wrong in identifying Katherine as an overwhelmingly sympathetic character in the play. It therefore is tempting to fall in with Katherine's anger with Wolsey: in this context, her opposition gives her "moral stature."[43] Nonetheless, the cardinal's response focuses on Katherine's apparent misapprehension of his responsibility in the divorce:

> I do profess
> You speak not like yourself, who ever yet
> Have stood to charity and displayed th' effects
> Of disposition gentle and of wisdom
> O'er-topping woman's power. Madam, you do me wrong. (2.4.82–86)

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42 Charles Jarvis Hill and William Allan Neilson, introduction to *Henry VIII* in William Shakespeare, *The Complete Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare: New Cambridge Edition*, eds. Charles Jarvis Hill and William Allan Neilson (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1970), 905.

43 Jennifer Richards, "Shakespeare and the Politics of Co-Authorship" in *Shakespeare and Early Modern Political Thought*, ed. David Armitage, Conal Condren, and Andrew Fitzmaurice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 177.

Wolsey attempts to explain that he has had nothing to do with encouraging the king in the divorce (and indeed, at this point in the text he remains unaware of Henry's interest in Anne Boleyn). Katherine's misidentification of Wolsey as the author of her troubles demonstrates the beginnings of the realization of Wolsey's prophetic concerns about being "traduced by ignorant tongues" (1.2.71), and her response to Wolsey highlights the themes on which anti-Wolsey characterizations had been constructed since before the historical Wolsey's death:

> My lord, my lord,
> I am a simple woman, much too weak
> T' oppose your cunning. You're meek and humble-mouthed;
> You sign your place and calling, in full seeming,
> With meekness and humility, but your heart
> Is crammed with arrogancy, spleen and pride.
> You have, by fortune and his highness' favours,
> Gone slightly o' er low steps, and now are mounted
> Where powers are your retainers, and your words,
> Domestics to you, serve your will as 't please
> Yourself pronounce their office. I must tell you,
> You tender more your person's honor than
> Your high profession spiritual; that again
> I do refuse you for my judge; and here
> Before you all, appeal unto the Pope,
> To bring my whole cause 'fore His Holiness,
> And to be judged by him. (2.4.103–119).

Katherine's speech highlights all of the key complaints against Wolsey: he was dissimulative, arrogant, proud, overweening, and ignored his spiritual duties in favor of personal increase. However, it is not entirely clear if we are meant to agree with Katherine or to reject her outburst. Campeggio, watching Katherine exit, seems shocked that the Queen would speak so:

> The Queen is obstinate,
> Stubborn to justice, apt to accuse it, and
> Disdainful to be tried by 't. 'Tis not well.
> She's going away. (2.4.119–122)

It is worth observing that Campeggio has little to recommend him to a contemporary audience: a papal legate, Campeggio was also a foreigner and thus susceptible to xenophobic responses from the audience.

In the final section of 2.4, we are given one of the strongest examples of self-characterization within *Henry VIII* and perhaps the definitive and summative view of Wolsey in the play, which has heretofore been largely ignored. After Katherine's dramatic exit, Wolsey, having suffered increasingly vitriolic and personal attacks, begs the king to acknowledge publicly this apparent injustice:

> Most gracious sir,
> In humblest manner I require your highness
> That it shall please you to declare in hearing
> Of all these ears—for where I am robbed and bound,
> There must I be unloosed, although not there
> At once and fully satisfied—whether ever I
> Did broach this business to your highness, or
> Laid any scruple in your way which might
> Induce you to the question on 't, or ever
> Have to you, but with thanks to God for such
> A royal lady, spake one the least word that might
> Be to the prejudice of her present state
> Or touch of her royal person? (2.4140–4152)

The king not only exonerates Wolsey, but also implies that Wolsey has been dragging his heels in pursuing the divorce: "You ever / Have wished the sleeping of this business, never desired / It to be stirred, but oft have hindered, oft, / The passages made toward it" (2.4.159–162). Here we see the beginnings of Henry's dissatisfaction with Wolsey, the cause of the cardinal's rapid downfall. Regardless of Wolsey's immediate prospects of disfavor, this detailed and particular dismissal of the idea that Wolsey was Katherine's enemy in the divorce can and ought to unsettle Katherine's assumption about Wolsey's culpability.

This theme is returned to and expanded on in 3.1. If Katherine is motivated by fear and anger, as seems clear, and she has identified Wolsey as the font of her troubles without any concrete evidence given to the audience, it is prudent to view her condemnation of Wolsey with some skepticism. Upon being informed that Wolsey and Campeggio had come to speak with her following her departure in 2.4, Katherine's musings about the cardinals' purpose seems cynical, given her dramatic refusal to participate in the divorce proceedings:

> What can be their business
> With me, a poor weak woman, fallen from favour?
> I do not like their coming. Now I think on' t,
> They should be good men, their affairs as righteous—
> But all hoods make not monks. (3.1.20–23)

In the transition between 2.4 and 3.1 (an indeterminate period of time, but logic presumes a short one), Katherine has transformed from the self-described queen of England and daughter of a king to a "poor weak woman" and "a housewife" (3.1.24). Katherine's use of the ambiguously ironic 'weak woman' trope marks the frustration and helplessness the Queen feels in the face of events she attributes to Wolsey, as evidenced by her cynical musings about churchmen's virtues ("but all hoods make not monks"). She highlights her necessarily limited wifeliness, and by implication, both the invalidity of Henry's suit and the immorality of Wolsey's alleged role in the divorce:

> Your graces find me here part of a housewife:
> I would be all, against the worst may happen.
> What are your pleasures with me, reverend lords? (3.1.24–26)

The apparent subtext is that Wolsey (and Campeggio), as the previously accused instigator of the divorce, is responsible for taking away the missing portion of the "housewife." In doing so, Katherine is returning to the same theme as demonstrated in her comment in 3.2.23 ("but all hoods make not monks"); she argues that even while Wolsey and Campeggio possess the outward characteristics of churchmen but lack the requisite internal moral structure, they hypocritically strip her of some of the characteristics of a housewife.

Of course, Katherine is not a simple housewife; the identification of herself as such casts her in a similar role as Hester in *Godly Queene Hester*, as the humble but regal counterpoint to Aman's rapaciousness and scheming. Her tone can be interpreted either as defensive in tenor—evoking her performance in 2.4, which provides evidence for an ironic interpretation of her mock humility—or as a genuine expression of despair. The former interpretation would fit with the broadly accepted understanding of Katherine's interruption of Wolsey as evidence for her refusal to remain a marginalized figure, as can be seen in 3.1.40–45. Wolsey, having first attempted to clear the room of servants (which Katherine counters), begins speaking in Latin:

> WOLSEY:
> *Tanta est erga te mentis integritas, Regina serenissima—*
> KATHERINE:
> O, good my lord, no Latin.
> I am not such a truant since my coming
> As not to know the language I have lived in.
> A strange tongue makes my cause more strange, suspicious. (3.1.40–45)

Though this excerpt seems to demonstrate Katherine's openness (and by contrast, Wolsey's furtiveness), this interpretation predicates a prior assumption that Wolsey is a villain, with the Latin evoking Wolsey's foreign allegiances (and his connection to Rome in particular, a point especially relevant to a seventeenth-century English audience). Alternatively, if we read *Henry VIII* as presenting a more nuanced interpretation of a negative public image, Wolsey here can be merely trying to uphold the dignity of Katherine's position (or, on a practical level, the victim of a dramatic device which caters to audience-members who would not have spoken Latin). This interpretation, while far from conclusive, does fit with Wolsey's meticulous attention to position and etiquette throughout the play (most notably in the procession of 2.4 and during his arrest in 3.2). Wolsey's apology and Campeggio's support give weight to this alternate reading:

WOLSEY:
Noble lady,
I am sorry my integrity should breed—
And service to his majesty and you—
So deep suspicion where all faith was meant.
We come not by the way of accusation,
To taint that honour every good tongue blesses,
Nor to betray you any way to sorrow—
You have too much, good lady—but to know
How you stand minded in the weighty difference
Between the King and you, and to deliver,
Like free and honest men, our just opinions
And comforts to your cause.

CAMPEGGIO:
Most honoured madam,
My lord of York, out of his noble nature,
Zeal, and obedience he still bore your grace,
Forgetting, like a good man, your late censure
Both of his truth and him—which was too far—
Offers, as I do, in a sign of peace,
His service and his counsel. (3.1.50–67)

It seems reasonable to take Campeggio's chiding of Katherine at face value, particularly as Campeggio has thus far only been figured as a "learned" clergyman and "reverend father." Of course, as mentioned previously, he is also a

Roman cardinal, and it must be pointed out that many members of an early Jacobean audience would certainly have held this against him. Nevertheless, Katherine accepts (or appears to accept) his conciliatory gesture. Instead of attacking Wolsey directly, she returns to the "poor weak woman" trope and laments her foreignness ("Can you think, lords, / That any Englishman dare give me counsel?") (3.1.83–84): the same foreignness which she dismissed along with Wolsey's Latin only a few lines earlier. It is this inconsistency which enables—even necessitates—an adjusted understanding of Katherine's trustworthiness as Wolsey's main detractor.

Katherine's final outburst against the cardinals is particularly notable as it provides a summative look at the points that have already been raised. In addition, it demonstrates one of the defining dramatic organizational mechanisms of *Henry VIII*: that of the *de casibus* tragedy. Katherine begins by predicting the cardinals' falls:

> CAMPEGGIO:
> Your rage mistakes us.
> KATHERINE:
> The more shame for ye. Holy men I thought ye,
> Upon my soul, two reverend cardinal virtues—
> But cardinal sins and hollow hearts I fear ye.
> Mend'em for shame, my lords. Is this your comfort?
> The cordial that ye bring a wretched lady,
> A woman lost among ye, laughed at, scorned?
> I will not wish ye half my miseries:
> I have more charity. But say I warned ye.
> Take heed, for heaven's sake take heed, lest at once
> The burden of my sorrows fall upon ye. (3.1.101–111)

Campeggio's statement that "[y]our rage mistakes us" is difficult to position. Despite his being an unsympathetic character by virtue of his legatine status and foreign birth, as we have seen throughout the play, Campeggio's statements are often straightforward assessments of the conflict between perceptions of reputation and blame. Katherine responds by predicting their own downfalls, which in Wolsey's case is realized in 3.2. Though she is proven correct in this respect, the rest of this excerpt is unsettling by virtue of its vehemence. In contradicting her, Wolsey's language echoes Katherine's own moral outrage: "Madam, this is a mere distraction. / You turn the good we offer into envy" (3.1.112–113). However, Katherine employs the same trope and proposes that the cardinals do not offer 'good', but rather seek to transform her from the

queen of England into "nothing" (as well as refusing to allow the two legates to effect such a change):

> Ye turn me into nothing. Woe upon ye,
> And all such false professors! Would you have me—
> If you have any justice, any pity,
> If ye be anything but churchmen's habits—
> Put my sick cause into his hands that hates me?
> Alas, has banished me his bed already;
> His love, too, long ago. I am old, my lords,
> And all the fellowship I hold now with him
> Is only my obedience. What can happen
> To me above this wretchedness? All your studies
> Make me a curse, like this. (3.1. 114–124)

Katherine's question in ll. 115–118 ("Would you have me . . . Put my sick cause into his hands that hates me?") is largely rhetorical. The audience would have been aware that despite Henry's defense of Katherine in 2.4, the king had already fallen in love with Anne Boleyn. As a result, these lines are largely received sympathetically: indeed, Katherine is perfectly right not to place her hopes in Henry's hands. Nevertheless, Katherine does not (or cannot) distinguish between Henry's and Wolsey's respective approval of Anne and efforts for the divorce. Here we see a prime example of how rumor and Wolsey's close association with Henry have predicated Katherine's assumption that the cardinal must have been the source of her troubles. However, of all the characters we hear from in the play, it appears that Wolsey is almost certainly the last to know about Henry's infatuation with Anne Boleyn; as we will see, Wolsey only learns about the affair in 3.2. From an internal perspective, Wolsey has proved himself until this point to be largely honest; the audience has seen no evidence of any predisposition against Katherine beyond hearing a general rumor about ill-will toward the Emperor. Katherine's interactions with Wolsey demonstrate the importance of perception of reputation: in Katherine's case, her misapprehension of Wolsey as the prime mover of the divorce leads her to promote an anti-Wolsey characterization.

Falling Like Lucifer: Wolsey's Final Appearances in *Henry VIII*

Wolsey's fall from power is linked clearly with both Buckingham's and Katherine's. The rapidity of Wolsey's fall evokes Buckingham's most closely:

while it took the better part of two years for the historical Wolsey to be stripped of his offices and arrested, in *Henry VIII* he appears to be in high favor as late as 2.4, though by the end of the scene Henry has privately told the audience that he is suspicious of Wolsey and Campeggio and their dilatoriness in presenting their judgment on the divorce.[44] By 3.2, Wolsey's fall has begun. While Norfolk, Surrey, Suffolk, and the Lord Chamberlain are complaining about Wolsey, Suffolk voices the generic complaint of the nobility in *Henry VIII*:

> Which of the peers
> Have uncontemned gone by him, or at least
> Strangely neglected? When did he regard
> The stamp of nobleness in any person
> Out of himself? (3.2.9–13)

It is exactly this concern that frames the enmity of the nobility toward Wolsey. In addition, they fear the "honey of his language" (3.2.22) which "hath a witchcraft / Over the King in 's tongue" (3.2.18–19). But Suffolk cheers his noble audience with the news that as Wolsey's presence in the play began amid paperwork, so would paperwork cause his departure. Suffolk tells Norfolk and Surrey that Wolsey's letters to the pope wherein he requested a staying of judgment on the divorce were accidentally sent to Henry:

> The Cardinal's letters to the Pope miscarried
> And came to th' eye o' th' King, wherein was read
> How that the Cardinal did entreat his holiness
> To stay the judgement o' th' divorce; for if
> It did take place, "I do," quoth he, "perceive
> My King is tangled in affection to
> A creature of the Queen's, Lady Anne Bullen." (3.2.30–36)

Wolsey's misplaced letter—an error simple enough to make for an overworked bureaucrat—might well have caused only a minor hitch in his relationship with Henry: after all, he had served his monarch well since Henry's early days on the throne. Unfortunately for the cardinal, the letter plays on Henry's already-revealed suspicions that Wolsey was not eager to see the divorce through (at

44 Jessica Sharkey has shown how the divorce has caused modern scholarship to gloss over a much more complex relationship between Wolsey and Henry. For more, see Sharkey, "Between King and Pope: Thomas Wolsey and the Knight Mission," *Historical Research* 84, no. 224 (2011): 236–248.

least, not while Anne was the subject of Henry's affections). Furthermore, here Henry has been given specific evidence that Wolsey has been secretly colluding with the pope to delay his divorce. Henry's displeasure evokes the Reformist argument that Wolsey was an example of how a man could not serve both king and Church, and alludes to the writ of *praemunire* in which Wolsey was cast before his arrest. Finally, Wolsey's letter refers to Anne as a "creature" who has "tangled" the king in an affair. The letter makes clear that Wolsey is certainly not Katherine's enemy in a specific sense, but rather was attempting to satisfy Henry's demand for a divorce when the cardinal discovered Anne's involvement: an inappropriate situation, as Wolsey's letter makes obvious.

It is in the cardinal's learning that the king was planning to marry Anne Boleyn that we are given to understand that Wolsey had no part in the new marriage or in pushing the divorce for her sake. The letter to the pope makes abundantly clear that Wolsey had no desire to see Anne as queen and therefore had no connection with the affair. Wolsey himself makes his views plain to the audience even before he has discovered that his letter has been misdelivered:

> Anne Bullen? No, I'll no Anne Bullens for him:
> There's more in 't than fair visage. Bullen?
> No, we'll no Bullens. Speedily I wish
> To hear from Rome. The Marchioness of Pembroke?
> . . .
> The late Queen's gentlewoman? A knight's daughter
> To be her mistress' mistress? The Queen's Queen?
> This candle burns not clear. 'Tis I must snuff it;
> Then out it goes. What though I know her virtuous
> And well-deserving? Yet I know her for
> A spleeny Lutheran, and not wholesome to
> Our cause, that she should lie i' th' bosom of
> Our hard-ruled King. (3.2.87–90, 94–101)

There is scope for irony, as Wolsey himself was of low birth and served the king; however, the irony is only apparent. Wolsey's actions, both positive and negative, are focused on two goals: promoting himself and his king. While it might reflect well on Henry that he was able to recognize the talents of a nascent Wolsey, it would not reflect well on him to saddle his progeny with a less-than-elite maternal forebear. Wolsey's scorn makes clear that he recognized the difference between his role and that of the queen of England. Wolsey has every reason to declare himself an enemy to Katherine: she has insulted him repeatedly, in strong terms, and in the most public of circumstances. In this

instance, though he believes himself to be in private, he defends her honor (if not her person) by declaring it unthinkable that Anne should be placed over Katherine. Here we see summarized succinctly Wolsey's great respect for the dignity of authority and position: in this light, it is not personal pride which motivates Wolsey to conduct lavish parties and ceremonial processions, but rather an aggrandizement of the institutions he represents.

This more positive interpretation of the cardinal's motivations is, unfortunately for him, not realized within the play. Wolsey's troubles are compounded later in the same scene when Henry himself appears with another mislaid document:

> It may well be
> There is a mutiny in 's mind. This morning,
> Papers of state he sent me to peruse
> As I required; and wot you what I found
> There—on my conscience, put unwittingly?
> Forsooth, an inventory, thus importing
> The several parcels of his plate, his treasure,
> Rich stuffs and ornaments of household, which
> I find at such proud rate that it outspeaks
> Possession of a subject. (3.2.119–128)

Astonished and angered by the enormous wealth the cardinal has amassed, Henry questions Wolsey on his loyalty, the fruit of which is a remarkably sympathetic and cogent self-defense on Wolsey's part:

> KING:
> Have I not made you
> The prime man of the state? I pray you tell me
> If what I now pronounce you have found true,
> And, if you may confess it, say withal
> If you are bound to us or no. What say you?
> WOLSEY:
> My sovereign, I confess your royal graces,
> Showered on me daily, have been more than could
> My studied purposes requite, which went
> Beyond all man's endeavours. My endeavours
> Have ever come too short of my desires,
> Yet filed with my abilities. Mine own ends

> Have been mine so that evermore they pointed
> To th' good of your most sacred person and
> The profit of the state. For your great graces
> Heaped upon me—poor undeserver—I
> Can nothing render but allegiant thanks;
> My prayers to heaven for you; my loyalty,
> Which ever has and ever shall be growing,
> Till death, that winter, kill it. (3.2.161–179)

Wolsey's self-deprecation ("My endeavours / Have ever come too short of my desires") can be interpreted as ironic or genuine as the director requires. The general interpretation has been to cast Wolsey's apologies as ironic hyperbole (no surer sign of villainy to a modern audience, unused to Tudor rhetorical practices). However, there is a clear opportunity to present the cardinal's frantic acknowledgements of gratitude as genuine. Even without the wealth of textual evidence which argues for a more ambiguous understanding of Wolsey, it is not difficult to imagine Wolsey's justifiable fear in the face of a capricious monarch's mysterious anger. Henry's enigmatic response does little to calm the cardinal, but is an apt summation of the moral message under examination:

> Fairly answered:
> A loyal and obedient subject is
> Therein illustrated. The honour of it
> Does pay the act of it, as i' th' contrary
> The foulness is the punishment. (3.2.179–184)

Wolsey's reputation in *Henry VIII* revolves around birth and perceived loyalty. His enemies and, as of 3.2, his king believe Wolsey's loyalty is to himself (and perhaps Rome, if pressed). The final interactions between Wolsey and Henry instead reveal the cardinal struggling to demonstrate his loyalty to Henry: that he fails is due to the matters discussed in the mislaid papers in Henry's hand. The documents signal Wolsey's undoing, a fact recognized immediately by the cardinal:

> I must read this paper—
> I fear, the story of his anger. 'Tis so:
> This paper has undone me. 'This th' account
> Of all that world of wealth I have drawn together
> For mine own ends—indeed to gain the popedom

> And fee my friends in Rome. O, negligence,
> Fir for a fool to fall by! What cross devil
> Made me put this main secret in the packet I sent the King?
> Is there no way to cure this?
> No new device to beat this from his brains?
> I know 't will stir him strongly. Yet I know
> A way, if it take right, in spite of fortune
> Will bring me off again. What's this? "To th' Pope?"
> The letter, as I live, with all the business
> I writ to 's Holiness. Nay then, farewell.
> I have touched the highest point of all my greatness,
> And from that full meridian of my glory
> I haste now to my setting. I shall fall
> Like a bright exhalation in the evening,
> And no man see me more. (3.2.209–227)

The moral point being raised in this exchange is that a man cannot serve two masters, as Wolsey was demonstrably trying to do. A quintessentially Reformation argument against the spiritual supremacy of the papacy over a king in his own kingdom, this Biblical injunction featured heavily in the polemical literature of the Tudor period. For example, in Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* this argument is voiced many times, most notably in Nicholas Latimer's self-defense at his arraignment:

> Then M. Latimer making his protestation, that notwithstanding these his aunswers it should not be taken that thereby he would acknowledge any authority of the Bishop of Rome, saying that he was the King and Queene their Maiesties subiect and not the Popes, neither coulde serue two masters at one tyme, except hee should first renounce one of them: required the Notaries so to take his protestation, that what soeuer he should say or do, it should not be taken as though hee did thereby agree to any authority that came from the Bishop of Rome.[45]

The reference is to the argument made throughout both the Old and New Testaments against worshipping the God of Israel as well as idols or other deities:

45 Foxe, 1570 ed., 1968.

> Nemo potest duobus dominis servire
> Aut enim unum odio habebit et alterum diliget
> Aut unum sustinebit et alterum contemnet
> Non potestis Deo servire et mamonae[.][46]
>
> [Translation by Miles Coverdale in his 1535 Bible:]
>
> No man can serue two masters. For ether he shall hate the one and loue the other: or els he shall leane to the one, and despise the other: Ye can not serue God and mammon.[47]

Reformers like Latimer and Foxe utilized this argument for supporting the supremacy of the monarch as head of both church and state, identifying God with the anointed monarch and taking the secular power and wealth of the pope as a connection to Mammon. This quotation is particularly apt for Wolsey, as it also could be taken as a warning to the cardinal that striving for personal gain and service to the king are incompatible. The allusion to this largely Reformed concern reinforces the attribution of portions of this scene to Fletcher (son of the Reformist bishop of London and the grandson of Richard Fletcher, close friend of Foxe).[48] Most attribution studies divide the authorial responsibilities for this scene at line 202, with Shakespeare allegedly having written the first section and Fletcher the second. However, as McMullan observes, the authorship question is rendered moot by the source material: "That a 'Fletcher' section and a 'Shakespeare' section demonstrate knowledge of the same page [in Holinshed] underlines the closeness of the collaboration (or the irrelevance of authorial attribution)."[49] The thematic continuity of this section of the scene speaks to the same "closeness of collaboration" (or irrelevancy of attribution).

In addition to featuring the "two masters" theme, this excerpt also aptly demonstrates the 'paperwork' theme that this study has proposed. Wolsey does not blame Henry for his imminent downfall (immediately after this speech, Wolsey is arrested by Norfolk, Suffolk, Surrey, and the Lord Chamberlain), nor does he blame his enemies or even himself. Instead, it is the paper that is

46 *Biblia Sacra, Vulgatæ Editionis*, Secundum Mattheum VI:24.

47 *Biblia*, trans. Miles Coverdale (Antwerp: Martin de Keyser, 1535), Matthew 6:4. Accessed via Early English Books Online.

48 *ODNB*, "Fletcher, John."

49 McMullan, footnote to l. 213.

the "story" of Henry's anger, and it is the paper that has "undone" him. As he receives the king's orders, in a final effort to buy himself some time in which he might change Henry's mind, Wolsey clings to technicalities:

NORFOLK:
Hear the King's pleasure, Cardinal, who commands you
To render up the great seal presently
Into our hands, and to confine yourself
To Esher House, my lord of Winchester's,
Till you hear further from his highness.
WOLSEY:
Stay.
Where's your commission, lords? Words cannot carry
Authority so weighty.
SUFFOLK:
Who dare cross 'em,
Bearing the King's will from his mouth expressly?
WOLSEY:
Till I find more than will or words to do it—
I mean your malice—know, officious lords,
I dare, and must, deny it. (3.2.228–238)

It is only the written word of the king, duly processed and authorized, which is for Wolsey the appropriate vehicle for depriving him of his offices. The mere verbal communication brought to him by his enemies is not an authority he recognizes: "Words cannot carry / Authority so weighty" (3.2.233–234). There is an essential difference in attitude toward authority between Wolsey and his noble-born antagonists: his is a mind ordered, tabulated, and processed, where documents and office provide an impersonal basis for rule. For his enemies, it is their heritage which dictates their right to command. For Wolsey, the bureaucratic effort and talent that paperwork represents is the source of his position.

The beginning of 3.2 offers a wealth of evocative rhetorical figures about and by Wolsey that highlight the quickness cardinal's incisive and political mind. When Wolsey refuses to relinquish the Great Seal to the earl of Surrey, Wolsey appropriates and reverses the earl's insults:

SURREY:
Thou art a proud traitor, priest.
WOLSEY:
Proud lord, thou liest. (3.2.252)

Yet Wolsey's enemies also are capable of using rich language to fight back: Surrey, in particular uses visual metaphors to great effect in this scene. Surrey, reveals his personal vendetta against the cardinal couched in a variety of these figures:

> Thy ambition,
> Thou scarlet sin, robbed this bewailing land
> Of noble Buckingham, my father-in-law.
> The heads of all thy brother cardinals,
> With thee and all thy best parts bound together,
> Weighed not a hair of his. Plague of your policy!
> You sent me Deputy for Ireland,
> Far from his succour, from the King, from all
> That might have mercy on the fault thou gavest him,
> Whilst your great goodness, out of holy pity,
> Absolved him with an axe. (3.2.254–264)

Surrey alleges that Wolsey engineered an elaborate scheme to rid Buckingham of domestic support before moving against the duke, and does so by means of vivid metanyms like "scarlet sin." He carefully portrays Wolsey not merely as an arch-Romanist (allied with his "brother cardinals") but also as an enemy to England (as he has "robbed this bewailing land" of a noble man). Wolsey combats this depiction by undermining Surrey's credibility while reinforcing his own;

> This, and all else
> This talking lord can lay upon my credit,
> I answer, is most false. The Duke by law
> Found his deserts. How innocent I was
> From any private malice in his end,
> His noble jury and foul cause can witness.
> If I loved many words, lord, I should tell you
> You have as little honesty as honour,
> That in the way of loyalty and truth
> Toward the King, my ever royal master,
> Dare mate a sounder man than Surrey can be,
> And all that love his follies. (3.2.264–275)

By describing himself with words like "innocent" in juxtaposition to Surrey, who is "false," full of "malice," and has "as little honesty as honour," Wolsey

again makes unclear exactly who it is that the audience is meant to trust. As with Buckingham, Surrey is provoked not only by Wolsey's words, but also by his intrinsic baseness:

> By my soul,
> Your long coat, priest, protects you; thou shouldst feel
> My sword i' th' lifeblood of thee else. My lords,
> Can ye endure to hear this arrogance?
> And from this fellow? If we live thus tamely,
> To be thus jaded by a piece of scarlet,
> Farewell nobility; let his grace go forward
> And dare us with his cap, like larks. (3.2.275–282)

Surrey here alludes to the practice of catching larks by mesmerizing them with a piece of red cloth (here a metonym representing the cardinal and his scarlet robes and hat); larks are ground-nesting birds, and when distracted with red cloth they could be easily caught and eaten. If the nobility submit to Wolsey's authority, they will be undone by the cardinal. It is also worth considering "jaded" in 3.2.280: though many editors take "jaded" here as a simple verb meaning to "befool" (which agrees with a usage found in *Twelfth Night*), it seems more likely that the author is also using "jade" as an image of the nobility reduced like an overworked horse; after all, the nobility is generally more commonly associated with palfreys and destriers than with worn-out old nags.[50] Shakespeare does use various forms of "jade" throughout his canon in several related senses: he uses it as a verb in this sense in *Antony and Cleopatra* (3.1.34), though admittedly as part of a more obvious horse-pun. The adjective "jaded" is used in *2 Henry VI* (4.1.53) as a term of contempt which may well have overtones intimating a general worthlessness. He also uses jade as a noun in *Much Ado About Nothing* (1.2.49) in a similar sense. The importance of this pun is not to be underestimated, as it forms a key part of Wolsey's enemies' attempts to cast him not only as a common craftsman (or laborer), but as an incompetent one: Wolsey (accused of ruining the nobility) here is set up as a poor horse-groom who ruins his horses through inappropriate labor.

Use of the "paperwork" and "medicine" tropes, as well as further examples of *repetitio* are turned to great effect in Act 3. As Wolsey's fall gains momentum, many of these tropes are aligned against him. When he tells Surrey that "All goodness / Is poison to thy stomach" (3.2.283–284), Surrey adroitly adopts Wolsey's metaphor and uses it against him to great effect:

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50 *OED*, "jade."

> Yes, that "goodness"
> Of gleaning all the land's wealth into one,
> Into your own hands, Cardinal, by extortion;
> The "goodness" of your intercepted packets
> You writ to th' Pope against the King—your "goodness,"
> Since you provoke me, shall be most notorious. (3.2.284–288)

Surrey's inversion of Wolsey's 'goodness' is here used to reflect how Wolsey's own words were what caused his downfall: a fact which the noblemen are quick to point out in detail. The itemization of Wolsey's offenses is a powerful rhetorical device and presents a strongly negative image of the cardinal. Surrey recognizes this and requests that Norfolk read out the articles of Wolsey's arrest, brought directly from Henry:

> My lord of Norfolk, as you are truly noble,
> As you respect the common good, the state
> Of our despised nobility, out issues—
> Who, if he live, will scarce be gentlemen—
> Produce the grand sum of his sins, the articles
> Collected from his life. I'll startle you
> Worse than the sacring-bell when the brown wench
> Lay kissing in your arms, lord Cardinal. (3.2.289–296)

Before Norfolk can begin, we are given an aside by Wolsey that helps to counteract the convincing negative features which are so dominant in this scene: "How much, methinks, I could despise this man, / But that I am bound in charity against it" (3.2.297–298). It is not specified if Wolsey is meant to speak directly to the audience or to the other noblemen, but given the lack of reaction from the other characters it seems clear he is speaking to the audience. Here we are given a straightforward moment with Wolsey in which we clearly see his struggle to maintain his duty-bound persona when beset by antagonists: the other characters cannot hear him, and cannot react to his contention that he is "bound by charity." The audience is given an insight into the private mind of the cardinal, shorn of any need for public posturing or image manipulation (but not his sense of irony, as McMullan rightly points out).[51] It is therefore in a sympathetic light that Wolsey can—and perhaps ought—to be understood throughout this scene. Though the crimes Wolsey has allegedly committed are "foul ones" (3.2.300), the cardinal stresses his "innocence"

51 McMullan, footnote to ll. 297–298.

(3.2.301): accurately, Surrey interjects that "This [his innocence] cannot save you" (3.2.302). Nevertheless, Wolsey confronts his accusers in full command of himself: "If I blush / It is to see a nobleman want manners" (3.2.307–308). This section evokes the earlier confrontation between Katherine, Wolsey, and Campeggio; however, where Wolsey and Campeggio were polite and dignified, the noblemen here are spiteful and mocking. Katherine provides the strongest parallel to Wolsey; both of these two proud characters found themselves beset by enemies (or perceived enemies) and both react tactically.

Wolsey's crimes, as enumerated by Suffolk, Surrey, and Norfolk, are far from "odious" (3.2.331), as Surrey claims. Indeed, the noblemen have been markedly selective in the articles they give: of the forty-three articles laid against Wolsey in Parliament, only six are mentioned here: that Wolsey wrote "*ego et meus rex*," treating Henry like a servant to the cardinal; that he carried the Great Seal to Flanders; that he conducted an alliance between England and Ferrara without informing Henry; that he stamped his cardinal's hat on coins minted at York; and that he used government funds to attempt to benefit the pope and to gain honors for himself. While an argument can be made for truncating the articles for dramatic purposes, many of the crimes Wolsey was accused of were graver than those repeated by the noblemen. By way of example, let us consider the fifth article, mentioned by Suffolk: "That out of mere ambition you have caused / Your holy hat to be stamped on the King's coin" (3.2.324–325). In the parliamentary articles of his arrest, more information is given: "For stamping the cardinal's hat under the king's arms on the coin of groats made at York."[52] Despite this being recited by Surrey as one of only six crimes alleged against Wolsey in *Henry VIII*, it is the fortieth given against him in Parliament, with the previous thirty-nine generally being of decreasing magnitude (article 39 details how Wolsey ordered the king's clerk of the market to take down the king's seal on a document detailing market prices and replace it with Wolsey's seal). That Surrey brings up this particular crime speaks to either Surrey's selectivity or the authors': in either case, it contributes specifically to the general public image of Wolsey as overproud.

Though several of these articles were fabrications and others are far from serious, they are sufficient to cement Wolsey's fall and to evoke pity in the Lord Chamberlain:

> O my lord,
> Press not a falling man too far. 'Tis virtue.
> His faults lie open to the laws: let them,

52 *L&P* 4.3, it. 6075.

> Not you, correct him. My heart weeps to see him
> So little of his great self. (3.2.332–336)

This brief extract acts as a summative moral statement about Wolsey throughout the play: that he had faults is clear to the audience, but the vulturine glee of his noble enemies is not commendable or inspiring.

The departure of the noblemen signals a structural change in Wolsey's stage-presence. Previously Wolsey usually was seen on stage with other characters, usually being attacked by them and usually on the defensive. In the final section of 3.2, Wolsey is largely left alone, or attended only by Thomas Cromwell. Wolsey's speeches shift from brief retorts to extended monologues, heavily weighted with moral lessons and ruminations on the fickle nature of fate:

> Farewell? A long farewell to all my greatness.
> This is the state of man. Today he puts forth
> The tender leaves of hopes; tomorrow blossoms,
> And bears his blushing honours thick upon him;
> The third day comes a frost, a killing frost,
> And when he thinks, good easy man, full surely
> His greatness is a-ripening, nips his root,
> And then he falls, as I do. (3.2.350–358)

Wolsey progresses from one imagistic metaphor to another throughout this monologue, providing summative ruminations on the nature of fate, the evils of pride, and the fickleness of princes. The overarching theme is the "fall of great men," which we have already seen both with Katherine and Buckingham:

> I have ventured,
> Like little wanton boys that swim on bladders,
> This many summers in a sea of glory,
> But far beyond my depth. My high-blown pride
> At length broke under me and now has left me,
> Weary and old with service, to the mercy
> Of a rude stream that must for ever hide me.
> Vain pomp and glory of this world, I hate ye!
> I feel my heart new opened. O, how wretched
> Is that poor man that hangs on princes' favors!
> There is betwixt that smile we would aspire to,
> That sweet aspect of princes, and their ruin
> More pangs and fears than wars or women have;

And when he falls, he falls like Lucifer,
Never to hope again. (3.2.358–372)

Wolsey is careful not to blame Henry for his misfortunes, but instead muses more generally on the variable nature of "princes' favors." He highlights his long and diligent service ("weary and old with service") and contrasts that "vain pomp and glory" with the less tangible benefits on which he feels he ought to have focused his life. The dialogue is marked not by Wolsey's anger, but by his sorrow:

CROMWELL:
How does your grace?
WOLSEY:
Why, well.
Never so truly happy, my good Cromwell.
I know myself now, and I feel within me
A peace above all earthly dignities,
A still and quiet conscience. The King has cured me,
I humbly thank his grace, and from these shoulders,
These ruined pillars, out of pity, taken
A load would sink a navy—too much honour.
O, 'tis a burden, Cromwell, 'tis a burden
Too heavy for a man that hopes for heaven.
CROMWELL:
I am glad your grace has made that right use of it.
WOLSEY:
I hope I have. I am able now, methinks,
Out of a fortitude of soul I feel,
To endure more miseries and greater far
Than my weak-hearted enemies dare offer. (3.2.376–390)

In this passage, we see how Wolsey employs recurring tropes (like medicine) to provide Cromwell and the audience with a moral lesson based on his fall. Of course, Wolsey is being somewhat disingenuous and certainly hyperbolic. That Wolsey attempts to convert his anger and disappointment into spiritual currency is commendable, even if it is not entirely plausible. This approach reflects the Wolsey found in Cavendish's *Metrical Visions*: as we saw in chapter 2, the Wolsey found in *Le Historye* is able to reflect on a misdirected life because he has been separated from it. As Cavendish himself explained in

his introduction to the *Life*, distance enables a new perspective; the Wolsey in *Henry VIII* makes the same realization in 3.2, claiming that "I know myself now" as a result of his forcible separation from power (3.2.78). Yet Wolsey states that he is glad to have had his burdens taken from his "ruined pillers," evoking his own marked use of ceremonial pillers in his progressions.

Wolsey's self-realization is key to contrasting him with the other characters in the play and demonstrating the value of a sympathetic reading of his character. Buckingham, for example, never admits or repents for his treason. Katherine never realizes that she has mistakenly identified Wolsey as the author of the divorce. By contrast, Wolsey's statement that he "knows [him] self" indicates that we should understand him as a victim of both circumstance and his own ambition, rather than a more typical machinating villain. He expands on this repentance with Cromwell, revealing a caring element to his character which is not always apparent elsewhere in the play text:

> [WOLSEY:]
> Go get thee from me, Cromwell:
> I am a poor fallen man, unworthy now
> To be thy lord and master. Seek the King—
> That sun I pray may never set. I have told him
> What, and how true, thou art. He will advance thee:
> Some little memory of me will stir him—
> I know his noble nature—not to let
> Thy hopeful service perish too. Good Cromwell,
> Neglect him not. Make use now, and provide
> For thine own future safety.
> CROMWELL:
> O my lord,
> Must I then leave you? Must I needs forgo
> So good, so noble and so true a master?
> Bear witness, all that have not hearts of iron,
> With what a sorrow Cromwell leaves his lord.
> The King shall have my service, but my prayers
> For ever and for ever shall be yours. (3.2.412–427)

Cromwell's request that the audience witness his sorrow is both touching and further undermines the grasping, self-serving image of the cardinal that the noblemen promote. Coming from a generally laconic man, Cromwell's praise of Wolsey and obvious distress is surprising, and certainly move Wolsey:

> Cromwell, I did not think to shed a tear
> In all my miseries, but thou hast forced me,
> Out of thy honest truth, to play the woman.
> Let's dry our eyes, and thus far hear me, Cromwell,
> And when I am forgotten, as I shall be,
> And sleep in dull cold marble, where no mention
> Of me more must be heard of, say I taught thee.
> Say Wolsey, that once trod the ways of glory
> And sounded all the depths and shoals of honour,
> Found thee a way, out of his wreck, to rise in,
> A sure and safe one, though thy master missed it. (3.2.428–438)

The poignancy of the scene is heightened by the audience's sure knowledge that Cromwell too would fall, in much the same way as Wolsey (though with a more violent end). Though this is a conversation between these two men, it has a clear revisionist element. Buckingham, for example, makes a final speech in which standard phrases of rhetorical phrases are interrupted by his own anger against his enemies. By contrast, Wolsey's final speech is appreciative (of Cromwell, at least), repentant, and didactic. Wolsey's final lines are morally instructive and provide something of a *speculum principis*: not necessarily for Cromwell, but rather for the audience:

> Cromwell, I charge thee, fling away ambition.
> By that sin fell the angels. How can man then,
> The image of his maker, hope to win by it?
> Love thyself last; cherish those hearts that hate thee.
> Corruption wins not more than honesty.
> Still in thy right hand carry gentle peace
> To silence envious tongues. Be just, and fear not.
> Let all the ends thou aimest at be thy country's,
> Thy God's, and truth's. Then if thou fallest, O Cromwell,
> Thou fallest a blessed martyr.
> Serve the King. And prithee lead me in:
> There take an inventory of all I have.
> To the last penny, 'tis the King's. My robe
> And my integrity to heaven is all
> I dare now call mine own. O Cromwell, Cromwell,
> Had I but served my God with half the zeal
> I served my King, he would not in mine age
> Have left me naked to mine enemies. (3.2.440–457)

This passage is saturated with Biblical references: "image of his maker" (Genesis 1:26), "love thyself last" (Philippians 2:3), and the final lines reference Psalms 18 and 71, as McMullan points out.[53] The strong morally instructive element, given in an ostensibly private conversation and devoid of any duplicity, speaks clearly to a level of ambiguity in regards to the authors' intended image of Wolsey. In his final lines, he is far from the pompous, vain, and manipulative politician that his enemies portray him as; instead, the cardinal is humble, self-effacing, repentant, and generous.

Eulogizing and Summarizing Cardinal Wolsey in *Henry VIII*

The death of Wolsey is no less significant in this play than in the other posthumous Wolsey texts in this study. Katherine and her gentleman-usher provide a point-counterpoint eulogy of the cardinal in order to provide the audience with a summative understanding of Wolsey in the play. The audience first is given an account of his death by Katherine's gentleman-usher Griffith, whereupon the two discuss the cardinal's life and death. Katherine gives an unkind eulogy:

> So may he rest: his faults lie gently on him.
> Yet thus far, Griffith, give me leave to speak him,
> And yet with charity. He was a man of an unbounded stomach, ever ranking
> Himself with princes; one that by suggestion
> Tied all the kingdom. Simony was fair play.
> His own opinion was his law. I' th' presence
> He would say untruths, and be ever double
> Both in his words and meaning. He was never,
> But where he meant to ruin, pitiful.
> His promises were as he then was, mighty;
> But his performance, as he is now, nothing.
> Of his own body he was ill, and gave
> The clergy ill example. (4.2.31–44)

Katherine's speech acts as a summary of Wolsey's general public image throughout the sixteenth century. She references his meeting with Charles V and embracing him as an equal, his strong-arm tactics in acquiring multiple

53 McMullan, footnote to ll. 440–457.

rich benefices, and his personal involvement in Chancery and Star Chamber. She picks up on images that have run throughout this corpus: illness, obesity, and the Machiavellian adviser.

Her castigations of Wolsey are contested throughout the play, as we have seen above, and this instance is no exception. Griffith begs an opportunity to "speak [Wolsey's] good" (4.2.47), observing that "Men's evil manners live in brass, their virtues / We write in water." (4.2.45–46):

> This Cardinal,
> Though from an humble stock, undoubtedly
> Was fashioned to much honour. From his cradle
> He was a scholar, and a ripe and good one,
> Exceeding wise, fair-spoken and persuading;
> Lofty and sour to them that loved him not,
> But to those men that sought him, sweet as summer.
> And though he were unsatisfied in getting—
> Which is a sin—yet in bestowing, madam,
> He was most princely: ever witness for him
> Those twins of learning that he raised in you
> Ipswich and Oxford—one of which fell with him,
> Unwilling to outlive the good that did it;
> The other, though unfinished, yet so famous,
> So excellent in art, and still so rising,
> That Christendom shall ever speak his virtue.
> His overthrow heaped happiness upon him,
> For then, and not till then, he felt himself,
> And found the blessedness of being little.
> And, to add greater honours to his age
> Than man could give him, he died fearing God. (4.2.448–468)

The double epitaph provided by Griffiths and Katherine evokes the summative commentaries about Wolsey's life found in Holinshed's *Chronicle*, and Griffith's may owe something to the epitaph of Wolsey written by Thomas Campion, which appears in that text:

> This cardinall (as Edmund Campian in his historie of Ireland describeth him) was a man vndoubtedly borne to honor. I thinke (saith he) some princes bastard, no butchers sonne, excéeding wise, faire spo|ken, high minded, full of reuenge, vitious of his bodie, loftie to his enimies, were they neuer so big, to those that accepted and sought his fréendship

> woonderfull courteous, a ripe schooleman, thrall to affections, brought a bed with flatterie, insatiable to get, and more princelie in bestowing, as appeareth by his two colleges at Ipswich and Oxenford, the one ouerthrowne with his fall, the other vnfinished, and yet as it lieth for an house of students, considering all the appurtenances incomparable thorough Christendome, whereof Henrie the eight is now called founder, bicause he let it stand. He held and inioied at once the bishopriks of Yorke, Duresme, & Winchester, the dignities of lord cardinall, legat, & chancellor, the abbeie of saint Albons, diuerse priories, sundrie fat benefices In commendam, a great preferrer of his seruants, an aduancer of learning, stout in euerie quarell, neuer happie till this his ouerthrow. Wherein he shewed such moderation, and ended so perfectlie, that the houre of his death did him more honor, than all the pompe of his life passed.[54]

In providing these two oppositional viewpoints, the audience is presented with the central conflict surrounding Wolsey in this play: are we to take Wolsey as the villain or the victim of circumstance?[55] Katherine herself admits the "honest[y]" (4.2.72) of Griffith's account and, in doing so, serves as the confirmation for the manner in which we must be meant to view Wolsey. The cardinal is a difficult character to place, and while he has often been cast as the villain of the text, he shares little in common with traditional Shakespearean villains (from any genre) like Richard III or Iago. We are given no evidence that Wolsey has done any wrong, but the audience is continually given mixed images: a popular queen attacks Wolsey, but as we are given no evidence for her accusations (however emotionally justified), it seems clear that she has misidentified Wolsey as her enemy. The noblemen—the flower of English chivalry—are, by and large, jealous and distinctly ignoble in their scheming. By contrast, Wolsey is shown to be generous and touchingly human to his secretary Thomas Cromwell, who is portrayed as the cardinal's devoted servant despite the theological differences between the two men. We are told that

54 Fleming, 1587 ed., 917.

55 The unexpectedly positive eulogy from Griffith and Katherine's subsequent acceptance have often been pointed to as an illustration of the "failure" of this play as a collaboration between Shakespeare and Fletcher. Jennifer Richards has contested this view thoroughly, to which I might add that the multivocality of *Henry VIII* reflects that of texts like Holinshed's *Chronicles*: the title "All Is True" encapsulates that in reading early modern texts, we must understand that multivocality does not (and cannot) rely on simplistic binaries regarding the understanding of truth in representations of the past. For more, see Richards, "Shakespeare and the Politics of Co-Authorship," in Armitage, Condren, and Fitzmaurice, *Shakespeare and Early Modern Political Thought*, 176–194.

Buckingham is the "mirror of all courtesy" (2.1.49–53), but the man himself is pompous, self-righteous, and unable to control his anger. By contrast, Wolsey defends himself—broadly speaking—with grace and courtesy, and counteracts almost all of the negative imagery made about him. The negative portrayal of the cardinal is summarized most conclusively by Katherine in 4.2, but even she agrees with the far more complimentary eulogy given by Griffiths immediately afterwards. As a result, Shakespeare and Fletcher's Wolsey does not sit comfortably with Wolsey's overwhelmingly negative public image: it portrays the cardinal as a much-maligned, hard-working politician who was unable to serve both Henry and Rome and, despite his best efforts, was undone by the fickle nature of his prince and his own ambition, rather than his villainy. Though this textual interpretation has heretofore been overlooked, *Henry VIII* returns to Wolsey an element of redress which Cavendish largely failed to do in 1554, as the polemical power of the Reformist chroniclers was too much for the gentleman-usher. Yet pro-Wolsey extracts survived in parts of texts like Holinshed's *Chronicles*, and it is that undercurrent of generous treatments on which *Henry VIII* drew.

Conclusion: Traduced by Ignorant Tongues?

The aim of this book was to provide an overview of the literary characterizations of Cardinal Wolsey and examine how these images evolved across the sixteenth century in response to the social, political, and religious events of that period. We have seen how early critics of Wolsey began a process of adopting generalized negative imagery to criticizing the cardinal (beginning with the general insult "dog" before moving on to calling Wolsey a "butcher's dog," for example). As the century wore on, these images were refined and reapplied to Wolsey so that they came to crystallize around the Cardinal and, despite their initially nonspecific applicability, increasingly were utilized and understood to represent Wolsey alone ("that butcher's cur"). What is so fascinating about Wolsey and these Wolsey texts is this process of adaptation. Any cardinal could have been represented by the scarlet *galero*, and there were several English cardinals throughout the sixteenth century who were well-known during their respective careers: certainly William Allen's efforts to undermine Elizabeth I would have earned him a high level of domestic interest, for example.[1] However, whatever their contemporary or subsequent relevance, no English prelate has ever managed to capture the public imagination quite like Wolsey. His own aggressive self-promotion, evidenced through the reporting of events like the elaborately contrived reception of his *galero* in London, was an overwhelming success. Indeed, his efforts appear to have been so effective that they eventually came to represent his lack of godly humility. Equally, Wolsey's apparent efforts to seek out and punish those he felt were undermining his reputation (as when he punished John Roo of Grey's Inn for his libelous play) demonstrated the cardinal's keen awareness of the importance of self-representation. In part by the careful manipulation of his public image, Wolsey managed to place himself squarely at the center of the European political stage.

It is not surprising then that this high level of visibility attracted the attentions of numerous critics, who both adapted Wolsey's self-images as well as employing their own to appropriate and twist Wolsey's carefully crafted public relations framework. These images were powerful enough that they continued to be utilized and adapted by authors writing far after Wolsey's death and burial in Leicester Abbey. Although initially these characterizations were used to attack the cardinal and his policies, subsequently they were taken as a rhetorical trope, able to be adapted to serve contemporary purposes long

1 Cardinal Allen (1532–1594) was an exiled prelate who worked amongst the Elizabethan Romanist diaspora to achieve the reconversion of England. See *ODNB*, "Allen, William."

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after they ceased to be directly relevant to Wolsey. The literary Wolsey came to represent far more than just the man himself: rather, he became a vehicle for transmitting anticlerical, anti-Romanist, and antiforeigner sentiments, and was thus employed as a propagandist weapon in the Reformation. He was a target for anger from Romanists as well, since Wolsey was often represented as having betrayed the principles of the Church that he had sworn to serve. The resulting characterizations, after a century of adoption, adaptation, and transmission, gelled around Wolsey to such an extent that modern scholars and the public alike still routinely mistake mimetic and poetic history for fact.

This ongoing misapprehension of Wolsey's life and career is perhaps best exemplified by the final text in this study: at the beginning of the seventeenth century, Shakespeare and Fletcher undercut the stock image of Wolsey as a typical scheming cardinal by adding subtle reminders that Wolsey was not merely a melodramatic villain, but rather an imperfect person whose ambitions led to his catastrophic fall. Though Shakespeare's authorial intentions or opinions are famously opaque, it seems feasible that if we read Wolsey as the victim and not the villain, then Shakespeare and Fletcher have taken the dominant stock image of Wolsey as a bloated and nefarious prelate and undercut it by portraying a more human, multilayered character. This reading is confirmed by comparing other characters' actions against their perceived reputations: for example, Buckingham is referred to as the "mirror of all courtesy" (2.1.53), though he is markedly discourteous and unable to control his temper. By following this methodology we are given a play markedly different—and considerably more nuanced—from the standard reading, one which demonstrates how previous directors, actors, scholars, and audiences have allowed the stock images of Wolsey bequeathed to them by writers like Skelton and Foxe (as well as pictorial representations of an obese Wolsey, despite the fact that none were taken during Wolsey's lifetime) to color their interpretation of Shakespeare and Fletcher's text.

That Shakespeare's sympathetic characterization of the cardinal is the final incarnation of Wolsey discussed in this study is not just a happy coincidence, nor is this text merely used as a chronological bookend to round off the Tudor period; rather, it provides an ideal example of a text which plays with the ambiguity of authorial trustworthiness regarding representations of history to produce a more complex and rich characterization of a figure which, by the end of the Tudor period, had become an abstracted caricature. This play poses readers and audiences with an abstract philosophical question with historiographical and literary implications. Was Wolsey "traduced by ignorant tongues," as his character in *Henry VIII* feared? Jerome Barlowe and William Roy defended themselves by beginning their *Rede Me and Be Nott Wrothe* with an address

to Wolsey and any potential detractors: "Rede me and be nott wrothe/ For I saye no thynge but trothe."[2] This concern with the protective, instructive, even salvatory nature of truth is central to this volume, and its varying uses—or misuses—in the texts discussed highlights the problem with an anachronistic acceptance of written accounts as purveyors of "historical fact." Texts like George Cavendish's *Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey* and John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* have long proved popular with modern readers searching for a window into the past. The nature of these representations is deeply contested, however, and demonstrates aptly how persistent particular depictions can be. In using Wolsey as a case study, we can see that this approach is fundamentally flawed, as it relies on an unacceptably anachronistic misunderstanding of the evolving nature of Tudor conceptions of history and truth. Abraham Fleming's self-professed goal to "frankelie and boldlie speake" was made specifically to advertise his edition of the *Chronicles* as being a more truthful portrayal of English history; as we have seen, this claim was largely based on Fleming's inclusion of a large number of editorials to guide the reader's understanding of particular events.[3] It highlights that while there was an increasing emphasis being placed on accuracy, the objective reporting of facts was not the priority. Rather, as this corpus demonstrates, the goal was to provide the reader (or audience) with a convincing analytical tool to understand people and events: an interpretation that dispelled the artifices of the opposition.

Of course, this is not a new thought, and the problems associated with it certainly reach back to Wolsey's era and earlier. Yet the image of Wolsey as a morally corrupt Machiavellian villain that is still so overwhelmingly dominant in both scholarship and popular culture—the existence of which is so largely due to authors like Foxe—confirms that we have a great deal of work to do in unpicking the means and motivations which produced characterizations like this. There are innumerable opportunities to discover how these features applied to the real Wolsey, and how these same literary mechanisms reveal not just Wolsey but the authors, publishers, and editors that utilized them (to say nothing of the audiences and readers that received them). Too little literary analysis of historical texts has been undertaken, fruitful as it may prove: to understand these texts, we must first understand how and why they were created. We care about these texts because they provide glimpses of the past: by approaching them from a literary perspective as well as a historical one, we gain a far more nuanced understanding of not just the structures and objects of this period, but the people and ideas that shaped them.

2 *Rede Me*, f. a1^{r}, ll. 1–2.

3 Quoted in Patterson, ix.

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